ゼロの使い魔 14

〈水都市（アクイレイア）の聖女〉

ヤマグチノボル

MF文庫 J

Novel Illustrations

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や-01-17

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MEDIA FACTORY

580

9784840123198

ISBN978-4-8401-2319-8
C0193 ¥580E

1920193005806

定価：本体580円（税別）
メディアファクトリー
MEDIA FACTORY

ゼロの使い魔14 水都市（アクイレイア）の聖女

ガリア王ジョゼフの野望を砕くため、ロマリアへの協力を決めたルイズ。しかし、最も危険な役割を担う才人を案じたルイズは、ロマリア教皇の持つ「虚無」の力を借り、才人を元の世界へと戻すことを決意する。才人が突然姿を消したことにとまどうティファニアたちだったが、ガリアを迎え撃つために国境近くの街・アクイレイアへと出発したため、うやむやになってしまう。一方、ジョゼフの命令を受け、騎士人形「ヨルムンガント」の“軍団”はロマリアを目指して出立していた――。ルイズの運命は、才人の決断は!?　大人気の冒険ラブコメファンタジー第14巻！

ヤマグチノボル（やまぐち・のぼる）

1972年2月、茨城県生まれ。『カナリア～この想いを歌にのせて』（角川スニーカー文庫）でデビュー。著書に『グリーングリーン鐘ノ音ファンタスティック』『つっぱれ有栖川』『魔法薬売りのマレア　千日カゲロウ』『ストライクウィッチーズ』（角川スニーカー文庫）『描きかけのラブレター』（富士見ミステリー文庫）『サンタ・クラリス・クライシス』（富士見ファンタジア文庫）『グリーングリーン鐘ノ音スタンド・バイ・ミー』（MF文庫J）など多数。『グリーングリーン』『Gonna Be??』『ゆきうた』『私立アキハバラ学園』『魔界天使ジブリール』『そらうた』など、ゲームシナリオライターとしても活躍中。

Illustration

◎兎塚エイジ（うさつか・えいじ）

8月16日生まれ。大阪出身、大阪在住の大阪人。
現在、サラリーマンをしながらイラストを描かせて頂いてます。
イラスト仕事歴は
「道士さまといっしょ」（電撃文庫）
「ふたりはなめこじる」（電撃hp）
「神曲奏界ポリフォニカ ぷるう」シリーズ（GA文庫）
「悪魔憑きの目覚め」（富士見ドラゴンブック）
「ゼロの使い魔」シリーズ（MF文庫J）
などです。
初のイラスト集「兎塚エイジ Zéro ゼロの使い魔イラストコレクション」（メディアファクトリー）も好評発売中。

カバーイラスト／兎塚エイジ　装丁／blue

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平賀才人（サイト）
現代日本からハルケギニアに召喚された少年で、ルイズの使い魔。神の左手「ガンダールヴ」として、あらゆる武器を使いこなす。
ジュリオ
聖堂騎士の少年で、ヴィットーリオの使い魔。神の右手「ヴィンダールヴ」として、あらゆる乗り物を乗りこなす。
ティファニア
アルビオン王家の血を引くハーフエルフの少女。伝説の系統「虚無」の使い手。
聖エイジス三十二世（ヴィットーリオ・セレヴァレ）
ロマリアの若き教皇。ガリアに対抗しようと企む。伝説の系統「虚無」の使い手。
ルイズ
才人を召喚した、才人の「主人様」。彼を元の世界に戻そうと決意するが――。伝説の系統「虚無」の使い手。
ジョゼフ
「無能王」とあだ名される、ガリアの王。伝説の系統「虚無」の使い手。全てを破壊しようとするその真意とは――？
シェフィールド
ジョゼフの使い魔であり、様々な場面でルイズ達の前にあらわれてきた。神の頭脳「ミョズニトニルン」として、あらゆる魔法具を使いこなす。

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Chapter 1: The Flowerbed Squadron's Rebellion

The river gently flowed through the Capital of Gallia where King Joseph awaited in his palace.

From the old town center which extended from the central area, the soldiers on horses took 13 minutes to ride back to the royal capital city.

The streets got cut off, out of the long, uninterrupted stone wall. They couldn’t see that it hadn’t been cut off.

On that other side of the stone wall was where King Joseph’s family lived.

Whether or not the palace was built according to the kind of end and reading the scale would help you understand.

This much of the place was not searched and the land that made up the large palace was elaborated everywhere around the central area.

That night, with the favor of twin moons hidden by the clouds, darkness began to engulf the source of light that shone through the eerie night. One shadowy figure could be seen in the form of a horseman, who was swaggering and dashing towards a gate surrounded by red roses which was in fact the east side of the royal palace.

It was still dark even with the light from the torches that were hung on the palace wall. With the heavy rain that fell at noon, the humidity had risen up to its high point, and the night mist wrapped around the knight.

As a young knight was walking, on the right side of him was a knight from the White Lily who lifted his shaded hat decorated with the White Lily emblem to show his face to the young knight and said to him in a tired voice,

“However, regarding the Furotte Bilateral fleet and the rebellion, Commander Lord Claville knows that the government isn’t loyal to the king. Now that's

rebellion! Tradition falls to era, politics become corrupted, and nobility only thinks of increasing the gold coin of the warehouse, the commoners think and can increase only taking part in the share. All this leads to rebellion!”

The horseman took a deep breath and, with a small voice, started singing a song that was popular back in his town.

“Staying behind is my favor from King Joseph and the Founder. We together with King Joseph will reign over the radiance of Halkeginia. Could this be done by our Founder for some reason? What is the reason for this friendly help that came from God? Oh King Joseph. The fragrance of the flower that I received disappeared somewhere. Oh King Joseph. This place that becomes our homeland, it is beautiful. What are the many reasons I’m disgusted towards the rebel’s fleet?”

The Saint Mallon fleet that ported in the North West seashore of Gallia had suddenly confronted a rebellion after receiving a report that the naval port was being closed this morning. Many groups of horseman opposite to the chestnut fleet had obeyed the Capital’s martial law.

In that moment, it seemed that the troops surrounding the fleet exchanged glares with the people in the ship.

There was this young horseman among the troops, who looked like the old aged knight of South Lily Flowerbed that showed pity in his eyes.

"You would really think that this is the cause of the rebellion."

"That is what we've heard. We have to do this. Probably it has to do with the driving force at this time of night. But, if you compare to the other troops here that start compacting the duty of the Saint Mallon fleet, you probably can call it an easy mission to accomplish. The rebels want to stick to the same Gallia because they aren’t afraid.”

The old aged horseman let out a sigh and said amazing words,“The kind of man who frequently lowers his fleet command has no reason to be here at all.”

“What do you mean?”

“Everyone has a private opinion of His Majesty.”

The old aged horseman that was wearing an old uniform had a fatigued eye and, in the mix of insight, glanced across the stone wall.

“What? Is that true?”

The young knight who had just joined the organization looked directly to the old aged horseman who was in fact his own teacher. The only reason for his birth had been to become no more than a mere knight for this coming year. But if you gave him at least the rank of baron, by now he would have been entrusted to the Knight’s status. The words which were superior in literary and military arts came off until now and the callous did not grind. Therefore, the young knight had always had deep respect for him and kept his words in his mind.

They were surprising words indeed, it must be true now that he had said them.

“Are those people glaring at us?”

“They are probably playing around with us. It’s as if His Majesty was being made fun of from the inside and outside. But, I’m having a second thought. Even though His Majesty has always been disrespected, he’s an individual who’s to be feared. I have been serving to the royal family for 40 years and I always lower my sword below the waist in His Majesty’s presence. I know him very well. I teach the battlefield with my two fingers. But even the King knows that a man such as me fears him.”

The young knight kept staring at the old man, and let out a deep sigh.

“Does that mean we have to be playing their games?”

“Knights like that are like us. After all, this is no more than a comedian dancing in someone’s palm. But as for now, the mouth I've spoken with, it is probably understood. Because this might fly to your neck, not only I, if these enter to the ears of His Majesty."

The young knight straightened his back and nodded.

Two people appeared in the place where the forest spread luxuriantly on the left side. The Aignan Forest. In the section of this forest which became the hunting ground of the royal family, the young horseman saw a shadow which wriggled swiftly.

“Who’s that?”

The young knight clanged the rope on his horse and rushed to catch up with the shadow. He casted a spell of light, which illuminated the dark area, including the shadowy figure.

A man who wrapped his body in a black robe surfaced. The body just stood there motionless. The young knight pulled out his sword and readied to confront him.

“Take that hood off so I can see who you are!”

The man slowly removed his hood. Looking at the face that appeared before the knight, he was stunned.

“Lord Castlemorre!”

The face under the hood was Batz Castlemorre leader of the East Rose Knights. He was not too old, and yet not too young. He was a responsible man who had been led by famous knights. It was his bravery that had made him famous, even the Flower Bed knights should know him.

He stared at the young knight with a hard expression.

The young knight was puzzled, and sheathed his sword.

"Why are you here? For the East Rose knights to be here, it is to face the Saint Mallon fleet, isn't it?"

"Why not open, and we hope through this..."

He murmured in the young knight's ear. He shook his head with a troubled look on his face. It was probably a life risking duty. But it was still a duty.

"It cannot be increased and it will be defeated in such reason. Because at these times, they are yours. You should know your curfew, no? Everyone we meet in this area, we received orders to arrest all, regardless of government position and status case. But, hey, it's just formality. If it's people like you, it's fine, you have to sign papers and check in at the guard post. Well, here anyways..."

But Lord Castlemorre did not move.

"My Lord?"

That time, an old aged knight who watched over the development at the rear shouted. He became aware of something and tried to warn the young knight.

"Frandall! Unsheathe your sword!"

The old aged knight pulled out his sword to ready to charge.

"Hey, what do you mean?" the young knight mumbled, the tide of the wind was flying from the rear of Castlemorre, it was simultaneous entwined into the body of the knight.

The young knight turned around and unsheathed his sword seeing that attack on his subordinate but felt how a mass of air sank to his stomach. With a harsh face, Castlemorre pulled out his sword from the young knight only enough to make him lose consciousness. Knights dressed in black robes began to show up one after another from the darkness.

"...Why?" As he murmured, the young knight lost consciousness.

Watching his men tie up the two fallen knights, Castlemorre sighed. *Was it a mistake to be found out? But we were lucky enough to be able to enter without the other knights seeing us.*

Castlemorre and the East Rose headed forward, despite the fact that they had received the report on the fleet. Even though they were Elite Knights of the East Rose, they secretly made the report in such a way the imperial government did not believe anything at all. Immediately, an offer of information was requested from the cooperators who were lying hidden in every place. The truth was being obtained in past noon.

Lies and rebellion.

The conspiracy of King Joseph.

King Joseph was holding territorial ambitions against Romalia. He even planned a conspiracy to deceive the allies, the knights of the East Rose including Castlemorre were excited. This was a situation where they were pretending to be rebels and allies to invade their neighbors. If the plan failed to follow, the

Kingdom of Gallia would perish to the deepest grounds, its glorious past would vanish even beyond the darkness.

Two hours later, when the order came to retreat in the name of the Saint Mallon due to the surrounding knights, Castlemorre had finally decided something.

I will name the fleet's flagship 'Charles Orleans'. The name of the younger brother whom you killed by your hands. Would you think of atoning for your sins?

If this is the kind of imitation that makes one to stick onto the conspiracy, the fleet will not do.

Not only that, the kings incompetence that is tailored to the actors trying to step up to their force.

Siege? Surrounding is what you say? But this depends on what? Perhaps their role will be more of a mere spectator. It is no more than, a portion of coloration in order to make the foreign country agree upon.

We cannot have patience anymore. When rising to action is now.....

Saint Mallon were waiting for the night as they made their way, as for the Ease Rose knights they headed to the capital.

The night had come forth, four hours had passed and they reached their way back to the capital. While being full of themselves, there were emergency flight quickly thrown to each regiment per seat where cooperation was installed.

Their ears were close to the face of Deputy Head Arnulf as they approached him.

"Three regiments definitely promised cooperation, and the report at present has reached that. They arrived at the capital this morning."

"That's reassuring!"

That was the first smile Castlemorre had made that day. Military aristocracy and the king disgusted by the current government was not small. But if the cause was different, then the story would be different too. *The stigma of treason are the*

ones who didn't return home. Even then the three regiments would respond to rising to action immediately. My decision was not wrong after all. Castlemorre and his men were to invade the capital from King Joseph.

"Three days after that we have to pick up the throne for Ms. Charlotte who has fled to Tristain."

Castlemorre shook his head when he remembered the face of the princess when she was a slave. He remembered the Duke of Orleans' gentle face, his heart was captured.

"... Your Highness, when we do finally dispel your sorrow of Your Majesty. As for the person who was born in the house of poor nobility, 'there was the possibility,' that that person would be pulled up to raise in the Knight's title. That is when it is finally here it will return the favor."

Castlemorre pulled out his sword up high and promised.

“Ladies and gentlemen! Knights and all, lend me your ears! We must now regain the throne! Later, the one who is appropriate to return 'it'! Do not be afraid! We shall not be rebels! We are the True Flowerbed Knights of Gallia!"

Knights all over the place jumped over joy with their swords up high above them.

"Behind these walls lies a sleeping man, who is a treason and an affront to God and his country! Let us go forth!"

Castlemorre casted the spell 'Fly' and jumped over the walls. Knights were following each other's back one after another. The Knights of the East Rose blew away the patrol guards with their magic and they all rushed towards Grand Troyes, where King Joseph awaited them.

Joseph was sitting in his throne, listening to his music box that played a harmonic melody.

Staring blankly into space, slowly lifting his arm like how a conductor moves, and waving his hands around the air.

While floating the expression which finishes to be intoxicated when it begins and entrusts the body to investigation of the Founder, the minister of state who accompanies the defense loyal retainer between the ball seats jumped.

"Your Majesty! Your Majesty! This is serious! This is treason! There's a rebellion!"

He was in a state of panic as he kneeled down to Joseph and continued,

"The Knights of the east caused the rebellion! They took down the guards, and will break into this Grand Troyes! Right now, we continue to have outnumbered the guards desperate resistance between the mirrors! Soon the broken line of defense will come here!"

The nobility which presently protects the palace is no more than only 20 names. They had stationed a few hundred mercenaries from the Duchy of Bergen generations responsible for the guard, the other team sat in the cavalry mage and there was no either expectation of counting in war potential. With the "conspiracy" for example, most units and horseman group appeared for the King's capital and had been paid.

The opening made them tired.

Despite the terrible pinch ..., Joseph made an ecstatic expression. Even when the minister of state was moaning, he could hear and listened to the sound of the music box.

"Your Majesty! Let us go quickly to the underground passage! My Escort Division will bring us to safety!"

As he noticed the threatening awareness, Joseph lifted his head.

"What is it?

"This is treason! which I mentioned many times did I not?"

"Well. So? So if you said, there was such possibility I had forgotten."

Joseph nodded, and slowly rose from his throne.

"In here!"

The Minister shut his mouth trying to say something, while Joseph looked at the entrance of the ball calmly. Beyond the entrance the boom arms of the Knights and Gentlemen of the rebellion appeared. When with the fearful sound, the minister of state frightened and collapsed on the floor.

"Well, well ..... the end is the end ....."

With the Knight's sword displayed on the sides, they clanged their staffs on the floor at the same time to display the appearance of the winning side. Joseph just stood there.

"Oh, if it isn't Castlemorre. Why are you here? Aren't you supposed to go with the order to go against Saint Mallon?"

Castlemorre did not answer King Joseph's question and pulled out his sword.

"King Joseph of Gallia. In the name of the God, the Founder and Justice. You are under arrest."

"So what kind of crime did I intended to commit for the law to judge the King of Gallia?"

"For the betrayal of my country. Your way is not the vessel of the king."

While pouring the hall the Knights of the East and surrounded Joseph with all their swords pointing at him.

"Come on! Attack!"

Joesph began to laughed out loud.

"Huh? Is something wrong?"

"Well, giving the point that 'I'm not like any other king' makes me laugh. Castlemorre, you do not have a pretty taste. But I thought it flattery."

"It sure is!It is no more than a performance in order to deceive your way!"

"A little more than truly ..... The eye which looks at the person has been lacking.

As you say, having completely, that I'm not suited to be the likes of a king. The truth is being noticed because of you. The inability has become extreme! Is that it?"

Joesph laughed again. Everyone was confused and Joseph turned back.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to sleep. I'm kinda drowsy after all this laughing. Can it wait till tomorrow?"

It seemed like Joseph's intention was true. Castlemorre and his troops were enraged. Perhaps this King really wasn't taking this seriously.

But, this was not possible to forgive.

"Keep Joseph in custody."

Some of the knights, being cautious of traps were getting closer to Joseph. While the others, pulled out their staffs and cast a spell against him.

As a butler approached the deputy head of Arnulf, he whispered to Castlemorre.

"Perhaps there may be traps. You take care."

Castlemorre nodded. Surely, there probably was a trap, but this didn't stop the names of the noble Knights that were there. The kind of spell the Knights were using was just so that one couldn't escape. Right now, Joseph was being held by a hunter.

But when Joseph put his hand on the knight's arm. Something happened. Joseph that was supposed to be captured suddenly disappeared.

"What?"

Castlemorre was surprised and the spell that was cast bounced back. The ball seat, the screen which was raised, the damask which was set on the rear of the ball seat, the mirror where luxurious sculpture is administered, receiving the magic of the fire and the wind, it kept on shaking.

However, Joseph was not to be seen anywhere.

Someone immediately casted a detection magic which would uncover any hidden magic in the ball room... But there was no response.

One of the knights cried out from the window of a light face.

"In there!"

"What?"

Castlemorre looked at the knight that jumped on the window.

"Um, what are they looking at?"

Just whether those which used what kind of skill, Joseph stood on a side of the fountain of the courtyard. The knight turned pale. The reason why he could move to the courtyard in an instant was not even recognized by any of the knights who were experts in magic. The magic that he could have used was the "Uneven Distribution" of the only wind system, but he had disappeared so beautifully that it couldn't have been.

Joseph, who said that he had no talent in magic, could not have used square wind magic.

The skylight window facing the courtyard was small, it was impossible to get out from there. Casltemorre ordered the urgent voice.

"Turn to the courtyard!Hurry!The enemy is escaping!"

The knights quickly ran outside.

They could hear Joseph's loud laughs as they hurried into the courtyard.

"I run and hide accidentally! Relieve reiterating! Instead, it has changed over the bed tonight. I ran faster because of my better body."

"What?"

"Phil Yarunsagusa Eoru Sunu ..."

That Sequence of chants was never heard before. Castlemorre might have forgotten that spell, or maybe he didn't even know what Joseph was casting, so they listened for a moment.

"Rado le Osusunu Uryu ..."

Castlemorre felt a chill down his spine. It was surprising. He feared the spell that Joseph was about to cast.

The square of the wind ... my, the gift of magic is not mocked, he has been called the king of magic terror...

Stay calm!

Castlemorre told himself.

There's no spell to blow up eighty knights. But powerful magic, that power is limited. Not to mention, you are in the palace. How could you do this by the courtyard, you probably will say that it'll be worth it?

"You scumbag! You let down your guard!"

Castlemorre lifted his wand and pointed at Joseph as he chanted a spell. Large spears of ice flew to Joseph.

Utilizing this, I would likely to bet on judgment before the citizens, but becoming like this, this is hopeless.

Before the spear could reach Joseph, he slowly lowered his wand and waved it like an orchestra conductor.

They saw something to some extent.

You scumbag king...

You and your spell are nothing...

"Eh?"

The floor shook. The ice spears that were supposed to be aimed at Joseph suddenly dropped to the ground and left him unharmed.

"...Leader!"

Arnulf cried. Castlemorre turned only to see Arnulf as his body receded. It looked like they might shift a large stone table.

Castlemorre understood something.

The whole palace was collapsing.

"Fool! What's happening?"

There was no spare time when spells were being cast. Then Castlemorre looked up to see the roof deteriorate and the enormous stone ceiling fall.

Grand Troyes was a beautiful stone palace which soon swallowed the whole troops of the East Knights as it crumbled. Joseph started to laugh. Not only the Knights, but his servants, the minister of state, everyone were there, yet, he continued to laugh.

A large amount of smoke rose from the ground and the area suddenly became quiet.

"This 'Explosion' is a very useful spell. It can just blast a whole castle. It really has been fun using this spell."

Joseph looked at his hand holding the 'Founder's Music Box' and grumbled. He removed from his pocket, the 'Founder's Censer'. When he stroked it gently an aroma drifted from the inside.

"But the explosion however did not serve a wonderful impression."

He saw one of his surviving guards who dashed into the courtyard when he saw him standing, Joseph smiled.

While being flustered, the survivor of the guard ran up.

"Your Majesty! You're alright!"

Joseph ordered him to turn around to the crumbled building.

"Gather people there. And from the midst of the rubble start dragging out the corpses, then place them at the gate of each entrance to Lutèce. By morning, to any fool looking at this, to a little more than looking at that, probably will understand the consequences of those who oppose."

The guard looked at Joseph and saw a devil in the depth of his heart but bowed down directly.

"...Ha... Hahaha!"

Complying with the order, the guard started to run outside.

"Hold on."

The guard suddenly stopped and stood firmly and stiff as Joseph yawned.

"I'm going to bed. All this tires me out. It's making me more drowsy."

Chapter 2: The Third Annual Enthronement Ceremony

The third annual enthronement ceremony of the pope was to be held 300 miles north-east from the city of Romalia, near the border Gallia, inside the Town of Aquileia. This ceremony lasts as long as 2 weeks, which makes it a grand festival.

The Romalian church makes intensive preparation towards the journey to Aquileia.

Inside a courtyard surrounded by five towers and one main tower, every single civil servant, commander and priest board ships, each decorated with specific religious crests. In comparison, the main tower harbours a gigantic warship for the sole usage of the pope. The pier aboard the main tower is only authorized for usage when the pope wayfares.

The Holy knights of the church riding on pegasus' waited in the sky above, going through their procedures.

Despite the fact that Guiche and Ondine Water Spirit Knights would be the ones accompanying Henrietta on board the ship, they were delayed from boarding the ship because of certain circumstances.

Everyone on the harbour, which was extended like a balcony from the main tower of the large cathedral, waited impatiently for the arrival of their companions.

"What in the world is Saito doing..."

Malicorne murmured anxiously.

Makes sense.

Though the apparant fact that the departure time is approaching, Saito, who bared quite a bit of responsibility, had yet to show up. Since he also skipped the training yesterday, it was inevitable for everyone to feel anxious.

"Did he escape out of fear?"

One of the students said with a hint of agitation. Everyone in the Ondine water spirit Knights were informed that they must prevent Gallia's conspiracy towards the pope.

Even if they assumed that the plan of Gallia was to assassinate the Pope of the highest authority in Halkeginia, they did not know what it was Gallia was trying to achieve through this conspiracy. But anyhow, it didn't seem like the enemy would be unprepared for anything.

More the reason why experiencing fear was expected.

A few students started to murmur "Knew he couldn't escape his status as a plebeian..." and similar topics. Guiche responded with a grunt and shook his head

"I don't think so. That is because he is a man who would still stand up no matter the number of times defeated by my Valkyrie."

"Besides, he is a man who bravely stood against an army of 70,000. How could some feeble plan of Gallia scare him?"

Malicorne nodded whilst easily amending Guiche's conceited tone, at the same time refuting the theories of Saito being a scaredy cat.

Reynard, who was silent the whole time opened his mouth

"Actually... I saw Saito yesterday."

"What!?"

Everyone focused on this teenager wearing glasses with a seemingly serious character.

"It's something which happened yesterday morning. I saw him and Louise walk

out of the cathedral side by side."

"Why didn't you say so earlier?"

Embarrassed by Malicorne's roar, Reinard scratched his head.

"Because... something like skipping training for a date with girls... if I said that it would hurt Saito's reputation. But on the other hand, I also understand Saito's feelings. On the night before carrying out a dangerous mission, it is a must to spend time with the one you love. After all, it might be possible to die on the battlefield."

"Then aren't we the same?"

Hearing what Gimli said, Guiche shook his head

"The one in most danger is actually Saito. That guy messed around with the Gallian enemies a few times. Anyhow, it should be about time he comes out already."

As Guiche commented, Louise and Henrietta showed up, accompanied by Tiffania and Agnes. Seeing Louise's clothing, Guiche and the group were stunned.

"Aah! Isn't this the dress of a nun?"

What Louise and Tiffania were actually wearing was a white robe worn by priests. All of the seams were sown together using bright orange thread. On the neck hung a holy object, giving the impression that they were outstanding nuns.

"Both of them will participate the ceremony as the status of a nun."

Agnes explained to the people in frozen status.

Tiffania's sharp, pointy ears were covered perfectly by the hood, a much better fit than her usual hat, since none of the Philipe? believers would dare lay a hand on a nun. Just the perfect safety charm.

Unknown if it was also because of the same reason, Tiffania seemed to be brighter than usual.

On the other hand, Louise kept making a frowning face, grasping the holy object tightly, as if muttering the prayers to God. With Louise's unusual attitude, Guiche could not help but feel uneasy himself.

Although he wanted to inquire about what happened to Saito, under the presence of Henrietta, he was unable to make the words form at his mouth. Just as Guiche was wondering about what happened, Henrietta asked the exact thing that Guiche wanted to know.

"Did something happen to Saito de Chevalier? It seems that he has yet to appear?"

Guiche lifted his head and said

"It is what I had in mind as well. Louise, what happened to Saito? He was with you yesterday, right?"

But still, all Louise did was hold the holy object tensely. Observing Louise's weird attitude, Henrietta seemed to notice something, and asked her

"Louise, you look like you know what happened."

Louise took a long, deep breath and told everyone looking at her

"Saito has already returned."

Everyone was too stunned to say anything. Henrietta stared at Louise with wide eyes. Tiffania covered her lips wide open from shock. Guiche, with a surprised tone asked Louise for more details.

"H-He went back to the Academy?"

Louise shook her head and replied

"He returned to his world."

Everyone froze like a statue after hearing those words from Louise.

"Louise! What happened! Tell us everything!"

Guiche frantically shook Louise's shoulders. Slowly, she brushed off his hands

and replied

"You should all know that Saito is from Rub'al Khali, right?"

The Ondine Knights nodded. Everyone knew that Saito came from the place called "The East".

"... Saito received letters from his mother. It told him to come home"

"So you returned her request?"

Louise nodded. Malicorne pulled his hair and screamed.

"At this moment, it won't matter much if he didn't go back! Right at this critical moment..."

After hearing what Malicorne had to say, Louise gave him a stern look

"What are you talking about! It is exactly at times like this we should send him back! To this moment Saito has always been fighting for us. You call yourself an aristocrat! Is it not sensible to fix our own problems?"

Louise bit her lip, still holding the holy object tightly, and continued

"In any case, from this point onwards, we will never involve Saito in our conflicts!"

Malicorne then said with a troubled voice

"Although I don't completely understand... does this mean that we can never see Saito again? Or will he come back after assuring his mother?"

Louise closed her eyes for a while... then nodded. A pale-faced Louise never let go of the holy object in her hands, and returned to her murmuring. It was a prayer to God.

Noticing Louise's actions, the Ordine Knights' faces changed to a worrying white.

"Prayers, you can continue later. I still have another question, may I ask you of it?"

"Go on."

"Is it of Saito's own decision? Did Saito himself ever say he 'must go home'?"

Louise shook her head.

"I sent him back."

"How did you do it?"

"That I can't answer."

Everyone standing next to Louise became aware of Henrietta's strained face and stopped further pursuit. Everyone seemed to sense that this involved top secrets of the country.

However, the words of Louise stimulated everyone. Despite the end of dwelling on this subject, voices of blame continued to come out from the mouths of the Ondine Knights.

"This is no good! Even if he is your familiar, aren't you acting too much on your own accord!"

"I Did not! I thought it through thoroughly first!"

Malicorne tilted his head a little and said

"Right, but I don't think in the same direction. Perhaps Saito actually wanted to fight alongside us. If I were him I would've thought this way."

The teenagers all concurred with Malicorne's words and nodded vigorously. Louise began to say something, but was interrupted by Henrietta.

"Do you intend to shame me?"

All of this commotion between Tristain's Queen and her Knights caught the attention of the priests and officials of Romalia nearby, all of whom were desperate to eavesdrop.

With the sudden reminder from the Queen, the boys made a flustered face.

"It's a problem to be short of one chevalier, but a bunch of panicking guards because of this is another big issue. And I originally considered all of my handpicked guards to be brave knights..."

Being scolded by the Queen with such a serious tone, it stroke fear in all of the boys' hearts. Henrietta promptly followed Louise, who hurried to board the ship, and walked up the gangplank. Without exchanging expressions or words, one by one the Ondine Knights all followed Henrietta aboard.

Louise entered her cabin that was prepared for them and began to pray as she kneeled on her bed. Tiffania was staring at Louise across the room with concern.

She was obviously confused with the sudden event.

What does she mean by 'Saito returned'?

She once heard a story in Westwood of Albion that there was 'another world'.

... She said that letters were received by his mother from another world. I don't know how letters can be sent from a different world. But since Louise said so, it is probably true.

Speaking of which, when he was with me in the village he was talking about his hometown and began crying. I consoled him that time.

Tiffania was having mixed emotions. *I'm supposed to be happy that there is a way for him to go back to his hometown, but I can't help but feel loneliness. We went through a lot of trouble together and helped each other, but this is a sudden turn of events.*

She wanted to know the full story from Louise, but decided not to interrupt her praying.

Obviously troubled, she folded her arms under her chest. Just as she was pondering what to do next, knocks sounded from the door.

Standing there was Henrietta, accompanied by Agnes.

"Henrietta-sama."

Henrietta approached Louise but Louise didn't notice her as she continued to pray.

"Louise, please stop praying and look at me."

Finally, Louise lifted her head in silence, but did not look at Henrietta either.

She remembered the spell cast by the Pope 'World Door'.

"Louise, did Saito really go back to his world? You must have spoke to the Pope and Julio(?). Did the Pope really use void magic to send him back"

Louise closed her eyes and nodded.

What would make her send him back?

They would have liked to ask for a detailed story, but right then there was no time.

Henrietta placed her hand on Louise's shoulder and whispered to her ears.

"We'll talk about this later on."

Henrietta went to the cabin of the Ondine Knights and gave them a lecture not to panic from the sudden news. Although the boys seemed to disapprove, this did, after all, came from the Queen and they had no choice but to nod their heads.

She then returned to her own bedroom and made Agnes leave.

Resting her head on her elbows on the windowsill, silent tears glittered from the shine of the moonlight, a direct comparison to her smooth white skin.

While letting tears flow, she realized how dependent she was on the familiar of Louise. Even though he did not have many relations to that world, she still gave him such dangerous tasks with heavy burdens.

He has now returned to the world he belongs to.

"Isn't this supposed to be a blessing?"

Until now I've always made mistakes. Now, I have to somehow do all this by myself. I am the Queen...

She understood her own reasoning, but for some reason the tears continued to flow from Henrietta's beautiful pair of eyes.

"It must be that I wasn't prepared for the sudden farewell", Henrietta thought

As soon as the boat carrying Pope Vittorio on the other side of the waterway left, the crowds congregated on the docks of Maltailago bursted into cheers.

The city of Aquileia next to the border of Gallia, which was made from filling the oceans to connect several artificial island using just sand and stones. An incredible number of narrow waterways ran around the city thoroughly, just like a maze. This city had been the stage and setting for famous conspiracies and romances for quite a few times in history.

The ship "Saint Moraco" carrying the pope started to descend slowly. The hull of the ship seemed to violently push away the calm waters, making great waves. The water started to overflow and formed small little waves running across the surface of Aquileia's centre. Soon, the centre was flooded with seawater. This fact, however, did not upset the gathered group of Aquileians, who risked being completely drenched to approach the ship closer.

Actually, the seawater here was considered as a type of Holy Water. To the highly religious people of Aquileia, this was priceless.

The people of this city were completely used to ceremonious atmosphere caused by the arrival of the pope's ship.

After the aggressive descent, the ship slowly edged itself next to the walls of the centre. Sailors quickly jumped onto the dock and anchored the ship.

With the chorus singing hymns in the lead, a winding staircase used to welcome the pope was pushed out, making creaking sounds wherever they went. The staircase was installed at the gunwale of the boat, and cloth made of purple coarse fabric was laid down from the staircase onwards to the central part of the centre.

Awaiting at the end of the winding staircase were Mayor of Aquileia with Lord Letsosonic, the other Archbishop. They knelt down and greeted the honored guests with hospitality.

The first ones to appear from the staircase were a group of Holy Knights. They wore purely white mantle that covered most parts of their body and lifted holy staffs to their chests.

After a long procession of knights that came down the ramp, they were followed by the Pontifical College of Romalia. This too was a train of people long enough to make everyone not help but wonder "where from the ship did they come from?"

When these two teams had finished popping out from the ship, another round of cheers, more enthusiastic than the last, came from the crowd.

The next group that came down the ramp was from Tristain. Queen Henrietta diligently walked down the ramp with the company of two maidens at her side as the Ondine Knights sandwiched her front and back. The allied young Queen, Henrietta also harboured a popularity worthy of credit here.

Somehow, the cheers soon turned into a chant of "Long live the Queen of Tristian!", Henrietta responded with a light wave.

And... after all those honored guests had showed up, as soon as the starring actor of this day showed himself, the masses suddenly became unerringly quiet. Even the young boy selling water who was yelling "Hari!"(?) took off his cap and drew a cross in front of his chest.

When Pope Aegis the 32nd, Vittorio Cervale with dazzling eyes appeared in front of the people, the congregated people of Aquileia involuntarily sighed.

It was as if the shining light from this holy man had focused on each of the many people in this centre.

As soon as Vittorio raised his hands, and a smile was laid across his face... the spell of silence was broken immediately, and there were cheers so loud that it echoed throughout the place.

On the first night the pope and the people accompanying him had touched the ground of Aquileia, all of the members with knowledge of this plan were all sitting at the round table sitting inside the Cathedral of St. Lutia Aquileia.

Tiffania and Louise sat next to Henrietta, and next to them was Agnes. In a fairly distant side of the table sat Guiche with a strained face.

The other half of the table was surrounded by the officials of Romalia.

Right in the middle was pope Vitorrio himself, in the company of Julio and the captain of the Holy Knights. Next to them was the pale-faced Mayor of Aquileia and the High Priest of St. Lutia Church, discussing topics with uneasiness.

The mayor who had been informed of this plan worriedly said

"I am familiar with the plan, but is it true that Gallia plans to attack the pope?"

It was, in fact, the aim of the legendary "void mage", but to avoid confusion, it was not mentioned.

Vittorio nodded while wearing a kind smile.

"It is undoubtly true. The incompetent king of Gallia wants to rule the entire Halkeginia. Our father in heaven, my ancesestors and myself are all obstacles in his eyes."

Listening to how the Pope said that without hesitation, the mayor had to wipe off the sweat furiously dripping from his forehead.

Just my luck that such a troublesome incident had to happen within my term

The mayor who was on the verge of anxious tears thought.

"In these circumstances, thou should not endanger thou self..."

One of the events of the annual coronation ceremony was continuous prayers with numerous priests and priestesses.

During this event, Aquileia would be crammed with Halkeginian believers,

queuing up just to catch a glimpse of the Pope praying.

"The Gallian syndicate would be disguised as one of the believers to take action", the Pope and the rest of the people thought. But to the eyes of the Mayor, this plan was like a horrendous nightmare. Should the guards of the Pope fail, he would have his name left in the books forever, guilty of incapability to protect the assassinated Pope.

"The Mayor's concerns are inevitable. However, my knights and I will strike an unerring coup de grace towards our enemies."

Julio stood up and began to write the plan on the blackboard.

"As we all know, the thing we have to fear most is an attack by magic."

Smoothly, Julio drew the layout of the Cathedral with chalk.

"Therefore, to prevent our assailants from casting spells, we will use magical tools capable of detecting magic to surround the whole Cathedral!"

Julio marked a few points on the board.

"Obviously, wands or staffs are banned when visiting. However, suppose they use magic through some other method... the instant they use magic, we will be alerted by this device, and the magic caster will be arrested by the knights around here."

The mayor looked as if he let out a breath.

"Of course, that is not all. We would also cast several folds of 'air shields' to ensure the Pope's safety. Common magic or guns would be ineffective against this."

The Pope and the Mayor exchanged reassuring expressions, and nodded in agreement.

Although at many times most of the people were impressed by this plan, one of them just didn't seem to be convinced.

That person was Tiffania.

After hearing what Julio had said, for some reason an indescribable emotion seemed to flash across her mind now and then. When she was small, the one who entered her house in subterfuge and killed her mother was a normal knight under the orders of the Albion King.

When an organisation as large as a country wants to eliminate people in their way... especially when it would have a big influence on future events, would they use a conspiracy? Or would they attempt to assassinate?

If they wanted to completely remove the target, wouldn't it be more sensible to use other methods?

They would have applied a reliable, infallible method...

Tiffania hesitantly raised her hand.

"Miss Westwood?"

Beaming a smile, Julio looked at Tiffania.

"Y-yes.... may I ask a question?"

"Of course."

"Then ...in front of all these great people, although I consider it to be foolish, it has troubled me for quite some time. And ..., what if Gallia sends their army in?"

Henrietta smiled gently and said

"Tiffania, you do not have to worry about that. Gallia is a country of deep history. The Kingdom of Gallia IS a full-fledged member of the alliance of kings, not the alliance of nobles. They still have to keep up their reputation, and would not dare violate the contract signed, and lead their army across the borders and this sort..."

As this point, Henrietta realised that with the exception of herself, no one was smiling. On the other hand, Julio nodded his head in the direction of Tiffania.

"I'd say there's a fifty percent chance of that happening."

"What!?"

Henrietta's face immediately lost its colors. Calmly, Julio continued

"Until last week, there have not been many troops in redeployment. But now, since I was cut off from my informant, we have had to prepare ourselves. Near the border of Gallia, I have positioned 9,000 elite Holy Knights from 4 united teams. In addition, the fleet of Romalia is hovering above them for protection. The only fleet from Gallia capable of defeating them is the 'multi-purpose fleet'."

"You amassed an army at the borders of Gallia? Isn't this an act of provocation!"

Henrietta stood up and yelled.

"It does not matter even if it was taken as provocation, as long as it makes our job easier."

"This is different from what we agreed! Your holiness, are you trying to trigger a war?"

Vittorio shook his head and replied

"We are not the ones starting a war, the king of Gallia is."

"Aren't thou the one who could not tolerate bloodshed between Romalian Pilgrims! Having said all that you make preparations for the war in clandestine! I just cannot understand thou actions!"

"It is exactly because I cannot tolerate bloodshed, I would want to end this all in a showdown. That's why this plan was devised. Anyhow, rest assured, Gallia may be called home to a horde of soldiers, we have done what we could have done."

"Contemptible! Trying to conceal it to this day!"

"Your Highness"

Vittorio said with a gentle, yet dignified voice. His voice was just like magic, filled with assurance enough to make anyone calm down. Henrietta bit her lips and shook her head in defiance.

"Although I said that I hated war, I never denied the possibility of war. I only prepared enough to counter every possible scenario."

"... Thou are merely quibbling. I finally understand why you chose Aquileia next to the borders of Gallia as the venue for the coronation ceremony. Not to lure the enemy into mistakes, but to start a war"

Vittorio answered with a hint of bitterness

"The choice is not in my hands, but in Gallia's. Even now the chance of having a war is only fifty-fifty."

The mayor and the High Priest fainted away from the shocking content of the conversation. A topic which changed from a coronation ceremony to having a war really is too big for anyone to handle. Tiffania knowing that it was her question which led to this, felt goosebumps all over and held herself from shaking too vigorously.

On the other hand, Guiche, not knowing whether it was an act of determination or not, closed his eyes and stared blankly at the ceiling. Agnes was just as expressionless as usual. None of the Ondine Knights had responded much to the conversation either.

Henrietta stood up alone and stared at the motionless, silent Louise by her side

"I am deeply regretful that I may no longer contribute to this conversation. It is because Louise's father and I have agreed to 'never put Louise on the fields of a battle'. Now then, Louise, let us leave."

But Louise did not respond to Henrietta's call. All she did was hang her head apologetically.

"Louise?"

Julio used a soft, weak voice and reminded

"Miss Vallière has sworn under the name of God and our ancestors. She will devote herself for our ideals. Right now her allegiances no longer belong to you,

but to our one and only God. She is now our family."

Hearing the words "sworn" made Henrietta's face change colours. To aristocrats and people of higher status, swearing is absolute. To eat your own words is no different from suicide.

"Is that true? Y-you..."

Uneasily, Louise nodded.

Henrietta sighed and laid out her hands. An epiphany came to Henrietta. Saito was undoubtedly sent back to his world by the hands of Pope Vittorio using the "world door magic".

There's one catch here... Would any Pope, having sworn to use void magic for the greater good of Halkenia, use their trump card on a mere knight?

Undoubtedly impossible.

Henrietta seemed to realise the conditions Romalia used to lure Louise into swearing under God's name.

Familiars may be replaced, but void magic users cannot.

Instead of feeling anger, Henrietta was experiencing more of an emotion called sadness. A sadness no one is capable of relieving. In other words, helplessness. Henrietta savoured the taste of helplessness while staring at Pope Vittorio with a pair of exhausted eyes.

"Such a beautiful move. Looks like it's checkmate for me. Even this foolish Queen finally understands how your holiness was crowned as Pope at such a young age."

A bit of annoyance emerged on Vittorio's face.

"Haven't I said it before? I have my ideals. If it is to complete my objectives, I would not hesitate to do so."

Henrietta's face surged with redness. It looked as though she almost lost her mind over being angry and ashamed, but eventually she controlled herself. If you

think of it thoroughly, what the Pope said wasn't entirely incorrect.

Preparation for war is inevitable. Using Romalia as a scapegoat seems unfair.

"I get it. From now on I will make decisions after thoroughly thinking what your holiness will say. As for another issue, I will have to voice my displeasurement."

"Feel free to tell us all. I am quite satisfied with my actions."

Vittorio said decisively with a straight face.

"Then I will proceed. Your holiness has retired one of my close guards. Sealing the future of my knight, which means Pope Vittorio your holiness, this is a major involvement in my politics. How do you explain yourself?"

Queen Henrietta inquired with a stern tone. As if it did not matter at all, Vittorio countered

"Just as thou said, prior to Saito Chevalier De Hiraga becoming Vice-captain of your personal guards, wasn't he a personal familiar of Miss Vallière? Since Miss Vallière, as master of her familiar pleaded us to send him back, I merely acted what any Romalia Pilgrim would have done, to believe in our faith. Despite that, what Queen Henrietta said is very sensible as well. Without your consent, I am slighted. I will cover your losses in any method you wish."

"Did you really send him back?"

Vittorio nodded

"Affirmative. I opened a gateway to where his soul belongs to. In other words, I sent him back to his home. I believe it was the right choice to make."

As expected by Henrietta... during all this chatter, Henrietta kept shaking her head. Louise stood up suddenly, making her chair skid loudly away from her. She faced everyone and bowed, her weak shoulders trembling non-stop

"Louise." Henrietta addressed.

"...My deep apologies, everyone. I am not feeling quite well today and will take my leave."

Henrietta glared at the Pope for a short while, but eventually said, shaking her head

"Thou are really a scary person. Pope Vittorio, your holiness. After this ceremony has ended, I will have to reconsider the best method to approach the King of United Romalia."

Vittorio replied elegantly

"It is my honor to receive your Highness's compliment."

That night...

Louise, alone in her designated bedroom, was praying.

After seeing Saito leave, Louise had almost spent all of her time praying. If she had not done that, she might have had a mental breakdown.

Actually... she might already be in a mental breakdown.

Because... Just now during the conversation of "the possibilities of a war", I did not sense any change in emotion at all. It was as if it would happen in a far away land unrelated to me.

Dear Ancestors. The messengers of our holy God, our Ancestors. The holy God who will guide me, illuminate the stars in the sky, fertile the soil of the ground, give humans your love, and help me calm down...

Repetitious prayers over and over again.

Yet, despite how many times these prayers came from Louise's lips, she was still unable to think clearly. Louise stopped all prayers and laid down on the bed. Hands covering her eyes, endless tears surfaced.

All she thought about while crying was Saito.

Even though I knew I would become depressed... yet I chose to send him back.

Even though I can't stand losing Saito.

What would Saito be doing right now?

Is he seeing his mother?

If Saito found his love in the other world... would he forget about me? Saito has always said that "he loves me"... yet I never gave him a direct response. Instead, I had to find all sorts of excuses, I had to argue with him, doing these things as if cheating his feelings again and again.

Such an obstinate girl, would most likely be forgotten.

But what about myself?

Louise shook her head.

How long will these painful days last...

"If this continues... Even devoting my whole life to Halkenia will be an impossible task."

If I can't even carry out such a simple task, there will be no value for me to live.

I could say, I already am a puppet for Halkeginia. I made my choice when swearing under the name of God, in front of the Pope himself. However, to be bound by the feelings of being discarded, do I even deserve the title of a puppet?

If this goes on... I will not be able to accomplish anything.

Any method to grant myself peace, is also a method to grant Halkeginia peace...

"If I can't forget it..."

Louise knew there was only one method.

On one hand, if I did that, I would not be myself anymore...

On the other hand, is there any value to the current me?

Making Saito return home was the correct decision, but the current me who regrets everything...

What value lies in a person as contemptible as myself?

The least is to become a nun, endlessly praying... but even praying has a limit.

Afterall, to become a real nun, I must be able to unleash miracles from God.

And the real miracle... "Voidness"

Louise, who had left her room, stood in front of Tiffania's bedroom door. Because this place is intended as a resting place for priests and priestesses, the doors left and right all looked the same. Softly, Louise knocked on Tiffania's door, and just as she hoped, Tiffania seemed to still be wide awake. After the rustling noise from bedsheets ended, came Tiffania's soft voice of enquiry.

"It's me."

As soon as Louise's voice was heard, Tiffania opened the door timidly. A Tiffania in her pajamas welcomed Louise in.

"...This. This. And also this... I'm lost myself. Too many things have happened. But..."

Tiffania seemed to have trouble forming the words in her mouth, but finally

"W-Why did you have to send Saito back? Why?...Although what you did was a sensible choice, but Louise, you..."

Louise lifted her head and interrupted in a soft low voice

"I have a request."

"Request? What kind of request?"

Unexpectedly, Louise did not reply. It looked as though what Louise was going to say next required a lot of courage. Tiffania was also troubled by this. Just as both of them were silent, knocks rang from the door again.

While they were pondering "who could it be", the person standing outside voiced

"It's me."

Right in front of Tiffania's bedroom, was none other than Henrietta.

"It's that I saw Louise come in..., therefore..." Henrietta mumbled.

As sudden as her knocks on the door, Henrietta took a deep bow towards Louise and Tiffania.

"In front of both of you, I do not have any excuses. Although I promised never to use either of you as a tool of war, things turned out like this."

Tiffania shook her head.

"N-Not necessarily... perhaps there won't be a war. Besides... I don't think preparing for every possible scenario is something bad."

"I guess" Henrietta sighed.

"But anyhow Gallia is still an indispensable part of Halkeginia. If their conspiracy does not achieve their goals, waging war is also perfectly possible. This is what I should have originally thought of, but I ignored it and was hoping for the best, putting you two into these risks...perhaps I really do not possess the skills a Queen should have."

Facing her cousin pouring out her thoughts, Tiffania was wide eye with shock.

"...H-Hearing you say you 'do not possess the skills a Queen should have' or similar topics, I would be in a troubled position. If someone else heard it, wouldn't the consequences be very bad?"

Henrietta was shocked by the sudden reminder, then nodded in agreement.

"You are absolutely right. Perhaps it is because you are my cousin, I instinctively spewed out everything."

Afterwards, Henrietta looked at Tiffania with a serious face and said

"Tiffania, are you really alright with it? Even if a war broke out... would you continue to aid us?"

Tiffania gave it quite some thought, then shook her head and replied

"...To be honest, I am not sure myself either. I was brought to this world by Saito. Therefore, I would follow his decisions. But now..."

"He won't be coming back anymore. I am here to ask Louise and you about this"

Henrietta turned to Louise, who was hanging her head

"Why did you return Saito back? Yes, he is not a person from this world. Even if returning him back to his homeworld is the right decision. Louise, aren't you..."

With reference to what Henrietta just said, Tiffania nodded. Saito loves Louise. Moreover, Louise seems to love Saito as well...

"I value his presence, that's it. I do not have any excess feelings for him"

Louise said, as though neglecting a part of her true feelings.

"That's why... I thought what was best for him. What is happiness to him. For his happiness, what can I do."

A moment of silence fell across the room. Henrietta sighed and muttered "Is that so...", then held Louise's shoulders tightly.

"You're too gentle, such an idiot. Louise Françoise. Since I first knew you, you were like this. Doing these unnecessary things out of compassion. Like continuously watering a cactus but eventually drowning it. ...Saito actually desires to be your knight."

"But, even if I were like the person you described, what I did was for his sake. Every human has their own homeworld"

"I'd want to agree with you too. Afterall, we were best friends from a small age. But, I reckon the one to decide shouldn't be you. Seriously, you didn't even discuss it with me..."

Henrietta shook her head out of loneliness and closed her eyes.

"Really, I still haven't given him my words of gratitude over the countless times he's helped us..."

The air became dense with sadness and regret, even Tiffania who was listening silently had a sudden urge to cry. Henrietta's eyes landed on Louise's dress of a nun. Throughout the ceremony, Louise and Tiffania will have to stand next to the Pope wearing this kind of dress. Not only because of the ceremonial dress code, but also for the sake of "congregating all void magic users".

All of the trouble arose from Gallia's evil manipulator...

But to Louise, this dress also had another meaning.

"... You are not planning to live in a monastery, are you?"

"No" Louise denied with a shake of her head.

"When this is over and I have accomplished the expectations of the Pope and your Highness, I will request for the permission to become a nun."

Henrietta held Louise's hands tightly

"... My apologies, I went overboard. The one in most pain must be you."

"But, I already... can't handle it much longer"

Louise said helplessly. Then, as if determined to do this, she turned to Tiffania.

"Therefore, please Tiffania"

"Louise, do you intend to..."

Tiffania realised Louise's intention and immediately went pale.

"That's right. I want you to remove all my memories of Saito"

"What!"

Hearing what Louise suggested, Henrietta was in shock.

"Impossible! How can this be done...because, because, Saito is... is your..."

"It is exactly because of this, my memories should be erased!"

Louise yelled grasping her holy object tightly.

"We will never meet again. I am sure of it. It's because I chose it for myself. But if I continue like this, then for what purpose am I living for! Even becoming a nun of Halkeginia would be an impossible task. That's why..."

"Louise, Louise, I cannot agree to this request. Because, if you do this, you would not be the same person as you are right now"

"Am I not better off that way?"

Louise yelled with tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Do you understand me... Tiffania, if it is another void magic user, I hope that you understand my actions. I can't stand it any longer. I no longer have the faith to last any longer. Therefore... please"

Uncertain of what to do, Tiffania glanced at Henrietta for help. Although Henrietta's face was purely white..., she solemnly closed her eyelids, nodded lightly.

"...I plead you as well. Being alive yet unable to see each other..., how is this different from being dead. It is still indescribably miserable."

Tiffania hesitated for a period of time..., then looked into Louise's eyes seriously.

"Are you sure? If I erase your memories about Saito... you will lose all your precious memories. To you, you will lose this precious time as though a gem, for an eternity. Are you still fine with it?"

Louise reached into her pockets and pulled out a pin. It's the pin Saito bought for Louise as a present back in Tristain. In silence, Louise handed it over to Tiffania.

Then, she slightly nodded.

Tiffania shook her head in sadness, but submitted to Louise's plead.

"I will never forget about Saito. Because he is my most important friend. but Louise, to you, in this memory... just the part of recalling emotions is enough to make you suffer. Despite that, I still don't think... that your decision is right. But

if it is all for your sake... because, to me you are also a very important person."

Holding the wand, Tiffania started chanting the spell.

"*Nausido' Iza, eiwa-zu...*"

As Tiffania chanted, Louise treasured every last drop of memory she recalled about Saito. She felt like she loved these disappearing memories more than anything in the world.

"*Hagara.yuru'.Beogu...*"

The first time we met..., the disappointment caused from seeing such a familiar.

"*Ni-Do.is,' arruji-zu...*"

The person who saved me just as I was about to be squashed to death under the foot of a golem... The guy who did not care about noble statuses and slapped me across the face... The person whom I danced with at the ball, our coordinated footwork... The adventures at Albion... The kiss he planted while on Sylphid...

"*Berukana' Man, Iagu...*"

The conflicts we'd had in the midst of a war...

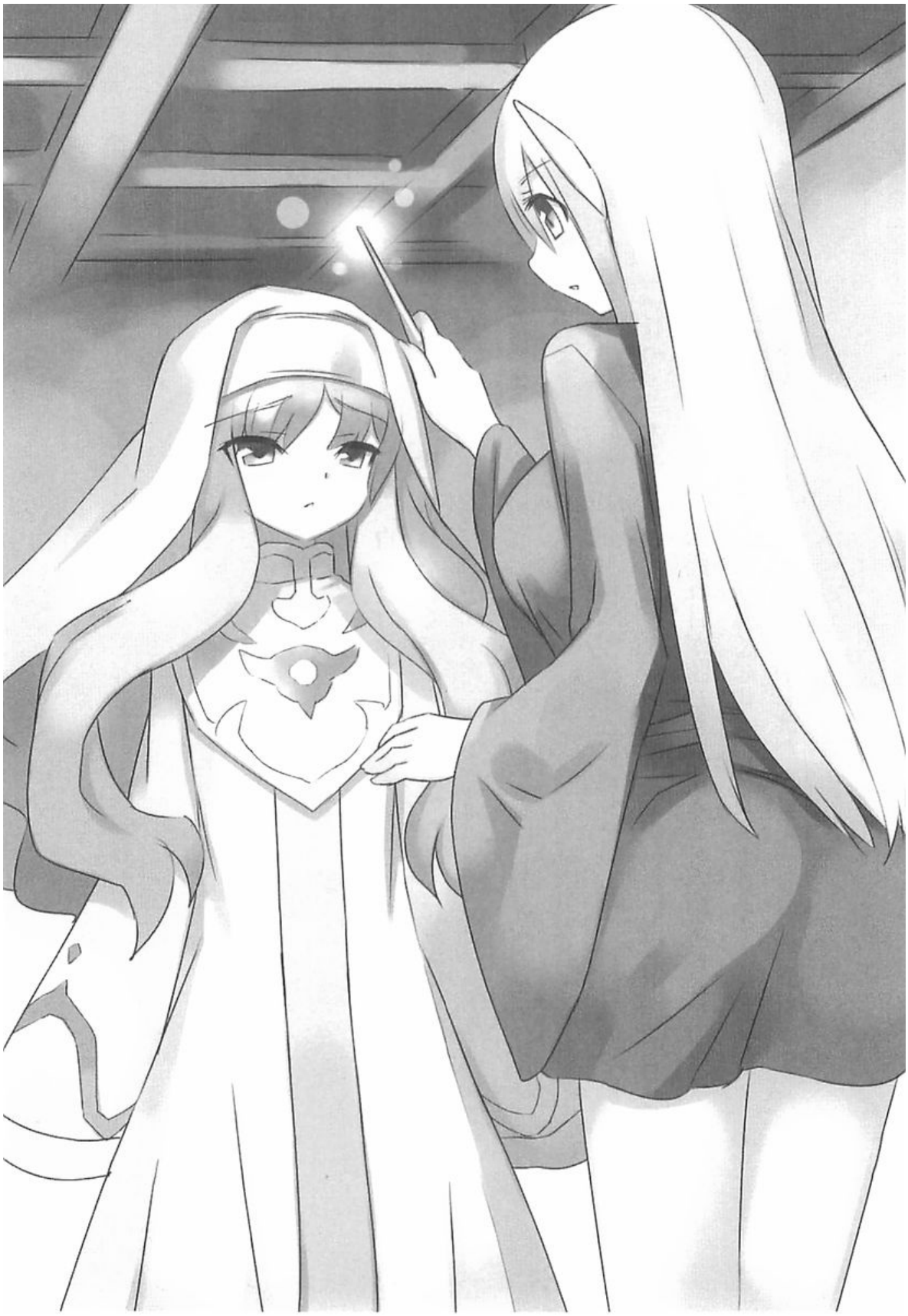
The Saito who sacrificed himself for the sake of me and the others...

An uncountable number of adventures.

Numerous times of wasting himself, but trying his best to save things for the last minute, the knight who belongs only to Louise.

The partner made from spending day after day together, a solid bond unites us together.

The number of nights spent together alone



A few kisses...

All of these were about to disappear.

Louise muttered "I am..."

"choosing farewell for Satio, choosing to forget for myself"

"Such an obstinate girl"

But, God, please forgive me

Because from now on, I... will definitely become "void". Literally void. Like a flask void of water, a human void of feelings...

Please forgive my sins

"Void"

To be suited for my void magic, Louise thought.

The spell was done, Tiffania waved her wand. Henrietta involuntarily turned away from the sight.

The void magic shone brightly in the room, then disappeared.

Chapter 3: An Elven Gandálfr

“What?”

I—I slept in this kind of place

No, that can't be possible. I'm inside Romania's church with Louise. Something is odd with her alluring presence.....then, in the room, she drank wine. The wine is mixed with some kind of medicine....

Does this mean that Louise carried me here?

Where is this place anyways?

Saito shook his head as he sleepily eyed his surroundings in confusion. He was sleeping on a hill that seemed bit taller than usual, leaning against an old man's tree's roots. Intense sunlight lit the same hill, making it a desert-like oasis. With a piece of shade around, only bits of sunlight leaked towards him, inevitably forcing Saito to squint.

The grass field is distant; mountains and forests can be seen.

Still, Saito lifted his legs and sat down, stretching his neck.

Is this one of Romania's grass fields?

Truly nerve-wracking. Saito shook his head at his situation. His body seemed fine, in its usual sweater and jeans, prior to the wearing a cloak.

He had been dressed like this during his times with Louise. Simply, finding himself moved here after regaining conscious in a church shouldn't be an issue.

Still, why would I be sleeping on a grass field……

“Each time I lose conscious, I wind up in some incredibly ridiculous place,” he

mused.

A figure emerged from the distance.

Who is it?

Out of habit, Saito reached towards his back, but Derflinger wasn't there. He had left it in the room. Aside from feeling a bit uncomfortable, there shouldn't be much of a problem; the approaching person's footsteps were leisure and slow indicating no hostility.

Slowly, the silhouette grew visible, much like the one previously seen....wearing a grass colored dress. Hidden by a hat, the person's face could not be seen, but based on the figure, the person must be female.

The woman approached him after he had awoken, and said.

“Ohyou're awake.“

Then, she lightly pushed her hat aside. Saito suddenly felt his whole body stiffen. Before him was a woman beautiful enough to induce fear in people.

She was around twenty years old.

She had a mature charm and cheerful presence to her. With a friendly smile, she threw a leather belt at Saito.

“I brought you water.”

He drank the water in large gulps. "Huah,” he breathed a large gulp of air before truly studying the woman.

“My name is Sasha. YouI thought you were a traveler based on how you were sleeping here, but I don't see any luggage...”

“My name is Saito. Hiraga Saito. I'm not here on a trip. I just found myself here after regaining conscious....”

“Right,” said Sasha before studying Saito. She easily removed her hat, revealing something that would have frightened just about anyone. Her ears were those of

an elf's.

“Whoa! E-Elf”

“Oh, you know of me?”

“Y-yes....”

“Ah, that's rare.”

The woman now eyed Saito with interest.

RareSomething was wrong with that phrase; everyone knows about elves in Halkeginia.

“Thank you for the water. I'm very grateful. By the way, what do you mean by people who know about elves being 'rare?'”

“I also don't know, the barbarians I've met have never seen my kind. Really, what countryside is this.”

Hearing Sasha refer to humans as barbarians had upset Saito a bit. If he wasn't mistaken, Bidashal had also referred to them as such that time.

“This place isn't Halkeginia is it”

“Halkeginia ? What's that”

Sasha's expression displayed apparent confusion.

No idea what Halkeginia is?! How is that possibleSaito couldn't help but feel anxious. But based on what was said……at least, this place isn't Halkeginia?

Saito began to believe that he was dreaming, but, “Ah!” That hurts! Looks like it wasn't a dream. With how things are, Saito couldn't help but slap himself in the face.

“Pah!” Saito called out in pain from the ground in a clear voice.

“What are you doing?”

“Nothing...it's just that I think I'm dreaming.”

“In that case, one could say that I'm quite fortunate.”

Saito began to search his memory: Since there is no land for the elves, this isn't a place in Halkeginia. Then, is this place the so-called Eastern continent

“Then, this is Rub' al Khali?”

“What? Even if it's not precisely what you meantI come from a place called Saharan, but according to him, that place is called ‘Igujestansea.”

Igujestansea....never heard of that name.

Besides, why did I find myself awakening in such a place?

Who is responsible for this?

Could it be that PopeBut what good would it do to leave me hereOr maybe, this is one of King Joseph's ulterior motives?

However, the heart of Romania, the Churchis not such an easy place to access, even for King Joseph...Wait...if say he used that “Void” Magic, it might be possible.

King Joseph?

Suddenly, he remembered something important.

“Ooooh!” Saito cried.

“How?”

“Not that....I suddenly remember! Right now, we're in deep trouble……there's no time to waste in this place!”

“What trouble?”

In haughty tones, Sasha eyed Saito as she spoke.

“OhAhI must have not made it clear. Where we are, there's an atrocious king

that wants to do absurdly bad things to us. Just to get rid of him, we're preparing for battle...I'm loitering here at such a critical time.”

“I can relate to that.”

Sasha opened both hands.

“Right now, the people of my tribe are being swallowed by the army[1]. I too shouldn't be idling in such a place, but he.....”

“Him?”

Saito asked. However, Sasha did not respond. Carefully looking, he realized that her face was colored with mild anger. Looks like she resented that “him.”

Having seen a real female elf for the first time, Saito could not help but carefully study Sasha.

She had the same golden hair that Tiffania had, along with pupils that appear as if they were transparent emeralds adorned with long lashes above them. Despite the sharpness of her eyes, its lines had an enchanting and gentle feel to them. She was essentially like Tiffania with all traces of childishness gone.

Beneath her robe, her aura was neutral.

The reason why Tiffania seemed approachable was that she was half-human....but facing this true elven female, he didn't feel an ounce of fear, despite having witnessed the elven Bishadal's unnerving presence.

Saito then thought: Elves and humans are definitely alike; each individual was unique to their own.

He once again eyed his surroundings. It was around noon. Distant clouds slowly grew larger.

Just as he was thinking, the sky suddenly made “pipapipa” noises as it rained. Saito and Sasha quickly hid under the trees.

“That essentially gave off an extremely pleasant feeling. ”

Sasha muttered as she looked at the rain.

“A pleasant feeling”

“Yes. As a matter of fact, I am someone who is too shy to face people, but I don't feel that way around you.”

Is that soSaito couldn't help but sigh. Speaking of that, he himself didn't feel distant, in the slightest, around Sasha. Even if he was close to Tiffania and has faced life and death situations, before an elf, who was believed to be one of the strongest and most feared creatures in Hakaginia, on impulse, he too felt....

“I also feel the same way.”

Having heard that, Sasha stared into Saito's pupils in surprise.

“H—How”

Being observed by such a stunningly beautiful girl at such a close distance, Saito inevitably felt his heart pound. Sasha's brows furrowed slightly.

“Somehow, it feels like this isn't my first time meeting you. I wonder why?”

“Even if you ask, I also……”

Speaking of which, Saito also felt as though.....

This should have been his first time meeting this female elf.....but he felt a sense of familiarity. This is indeed.....

“Is this some kind of deja-vu?”

“Deja-vu”

“Yes, this kind of feeling where a lot seems to have happened before.”

“Yes....”

However, despite the lack of simplicity in the task, when it was time to take another step and compare the minor differences between their experiences.....

Sasha suddenly narrowed her eyes and rose with a grim expression.

“What is it”

“Get down.”

Just as Saito wanted to question what happened, he realized that, on the field, a gray object had floated into sight.

“Dog.....?”

“You sure are optimistic. That's a wolf.”

“Oh? That's a wolf?”

Saito, having seen a wolf for the first time, carefully stared at the wolf that was about twenty meters away. It was really wasn't anything like a dog. It looked savage, wary of its every surrounding.

“Looks like it's intending to make us its dinner.”

“With only one of them?”

“Not possible.”

As expected, silhouettes of more wolves emerged, following one another. Maybe, they had been hiding in the bushes before to quietly sneak forward.

Forming a circle, the wolves surrounded Saito and Sasha. One side lowered themselves, the other slowly turned. The same vicious expression was plastered on all of their faces. The entire pack coordinated their movements, as if informing them that they were currently a part of their daily lives and their play-things.

“Is there anything that could act as a weapon?“

“What are you intending to do?”

“About that....., I gain confidence when I have a weapon on hand. The wolves should be able to sense that. ”

“Oh, what a coincidence, but I've got more confidence than you. It's really a matter of whether you are lucky or not. ”

“Yeah, but I suggest that you just lend me one if you have one. Anything would do. Even if that broken piece of wood over at the side there might be able to work if you push it.....”

Even without the Gandálfr's power, he could make himself a sword. Defeating a pack of wolves was something that he would have liked the Gandálfr's power for, though.

“No problem, just leave everything to me.”

In the next moment, Saito was at a loss for words from shock. He couldn't believe what he was seeing at the time.

As soon as she wielded the dagger, Sasha's left hand began to glow. Or more accurately, her left hand began to glow.

On that was something that he was very familiar with....runes that formed words that were already a part of his body by some significant event.

“GanGanGanGan—Gan—Gan—Gandálfr!”

“Oh, you know what I am?”

“It's not just a matter of knowing or not knowing—”

Saito showed Sasha his left hand.

“Ah! You too?”

Even if what she had said was an expression of surprise, Sasha didn't appear to be shocked.

“Anyhow, why don't you join me.”

Having said that, Sasha pulled out a dagger for Saito. Saito gripped it tightly. This elf was a Gandálfr? Why? There are other Gandálfrs besides me? How is that possible?

As thought it had seen Saito's momentary confusion, a wolf fiercely lunged at him.

Damn.

Now wasn't the time to think. Saito reacted quickly, bent down, and pierced the dagger into the wolf's abdomen.

“Ao!”

The wolf that was stabbed in the abdomen moaned. It fell and rolled on the ground. Sasha quickly turned, and in the blink of an eye, two lunged at her.

“!”

For a moment, it was as though her entire body had disappeared. An agile figure shuttled, just like the dancers from Albion, with her robe flying in the sky.

The wolf that had lunged at her either had its legs chopped off or was beheaded. It dropped to the ground. Sasha launched the dagger at the fallen wolf, ending its life.

Gradually, the place has once again fallen into silence.

“Why would a Gandálfr.....”

Be an elf and be in a place that isn't Halkeginia. Seeing an fellow Gandálfr, Saito was puzzled.

But internally, he was hopeful.

What kind of magic was this anyways?

Reallymagic.....something that whisked him away to an unknown place in the blink of an eye....making anything possible……Thinking of that, Saito suddenly cried, “Ah!”

“What is itWere you injured”

Sasha eyed Saito worriedly.

“No, I'm fine.”

Saito responded with a nod. Just, he had to immediately return to Halkeginia. Things are in the midst of trouble right now. Returning is of utmost priority. Everything else could be shoved to the back of his brain!

Right now, his only clue is that other familiar's master. He should probably know what happened.

“I would like to meet your master, who summoned you.”

“I would like to see him too, but I don't know where this place is.....where is Nidabelio? Honestly, what magic test? What good does it do for people!”

“Magic test?”

“Yes, that guy uses uncivilized magic. ”

Uncivilized magic....that's an indicator that it's "void," right

He always thought there were only four void users, yet there were others?

Saito felt his curiosity peak.

It gradually began to rain harder, hitting its way past the tree leaves, towards Saito and Sasha. Finding shelter beneath a tree was now useless. Sasha suddenly took off her robe.

Seeing Sasha in the tight clothes she wore underneath, Saito covered his eyes.

“What's wrong”

“I thought that it would be best if I didn't look.....”

“It's just a method used to avoid getting too wet.”

Sasha stretched out and raised her robe high up. After calling for Saito, the two of them hid beneath this temporary umbrella.

The robe emitted a mildy sweet aroma. It inevitably made people feel exotic. Is that the scent of elves.....? After feeling intoxicated, a mirror-like object

suddenly appeared.

That was the very 'door' that Saito had seen from the summon familiar spell.

“What is it?”

Sasha's face suddenly stiffened.

The frowning face could now be considered to be vicious. Saito instinctively stepped back in fear.

This elf was very scary.

Elves were certainly a frightening race.....

Sasha had an air of ferocity to her that was a hundred times worse than when she killed the wolves as she stared at the object in the mirror.

From the mirror came a somewhat short boy. He wore a firm expression and had golden hair that was neatly brushed. His entire body was covered with a loose robe.

Apologetically, the boy hurriedly rushed over.

“Aahfinally managed to get it to pen. So-Sorry. I'm really sorry. My apologies.”

Saito saw Sasha's shoulders tremble slightly. Then, her small throat emitted a high pitched, tangled sound:

“You barbarian——————”

Having said that, Sasha approached the boy, and kicked him with a pretty foot of hers.

“Ah”

The boy dramatically rolled onto the ground. Sasha helped herself to his back.

“I've said before, what have you and I both agreed on? ”

“Yes.....that's.....”

“Say it loud and clear!”

“This barbarian is very sorry.”

Sasha hit the boy's head again.

“Ah”

“The next time I take a magic test, I won't make any arrangements? ”

“Yes....do that. In addition, be sure to rely on nobody else.....and I'll say that this isn't even a test.....this is the product of magic research──”

“Isn't that just called a test!?”

Once again, Sasha slapped the boy's head.

“No, I'm truly very sorry, but there was no other way. It's an important time right now, that barbarous.....”

“I've said before that you don't have enough respect for living creatures. You really are a barbarian! I'm part of the noble Elven race, yet you turned me into a familiar. Due to that, you should be expressing much respect for me. But what did you do? Oh, try a test that destroys magic? I opened a teleportation door, and you immediately went to see?.....”

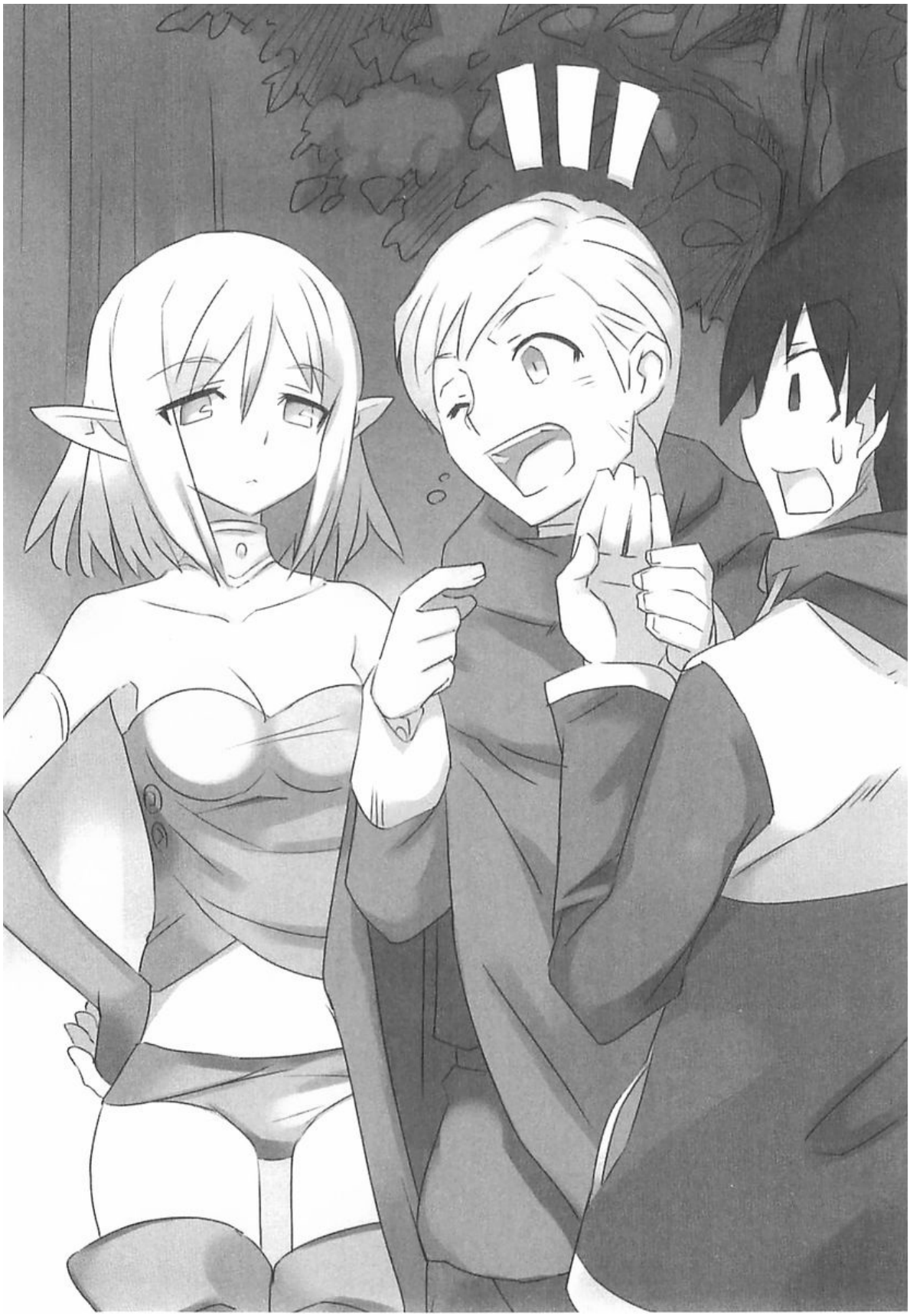
“I had no other way. We're at a critical time right now. That violent and cruel Valiag.....and there are only a handful of us. The only thing we can depend on would be a miraculous power, fighting with "magic."”

“What difference does it make to tell me that you were dealing with that Valiag!”

Witnessing this scene, Saito instinctively reminisced about a Gandálfr's relationship with his master. (If they are truly in the Void situation, it's extremely similar.) Do things appear to be this way regardless of location? As long as it is related to the Void, women are scary for some reason, even if the situation was the complete opposite of his own.....

This person, who is in a place called Igustansea, is a Void user?

Saito coughed with an "oof." He then made his way towards them.



“There's.....something that I would like the ask you.....”

Seeing Saito, the boy that Sasha sat on responded somewhat sheepishly:

“Ah, nice to meet you. You are? ”

“My name is Saito. Hiraga Saito. I know my name is very weird.”

“Oh sorry, sorry, he and I are the same—we've got the same runes on our hands.....”

“What!? You! Let me see quick!”

The boy suddenly leapt up with a firm expression. Running towards Saito, he grabbed Saito's left hand.

“This isn't a true Gandálfr! He's just some random gnome that was made agile by magic!”

“No, I'm not a gnome.....”

“That's not it! That's not it! Sasha, look! As I've said, there are people other than me who use this "odd system" of magic! Awesome! This is far too great!”

The boy grasped Saito's hand near his face.

“Quick! Let me see your master!”

Saito shook his head sheepishly:

“It's impossible to accomplish that right now....., I don't even know what magic sent me here.....

“This looks like, ” The boy suddenly exclaimed with disappointment, but, at the same time, he smiled lightly.

“Oh, come to think of it, I forgot to introduce myself. I am Brimir of Nidabelio.”

Saito stiffened.

This name was one that he has heard many times.

“What?”

“Yes, what's wrong?”

“Co-Cou-Could you please repeat your name?”

“Brimir of Nidabelio. Brimir Ru Rumiru Nidabelio.”

Brimir

Wait, wait wait.

That's....that's.....the mainland of Halkeginia's widely respected.....

“Founder Brimir's name”

“FounderWhat founderAre you sure you're not mistaken?”

Revealing a dumbfounded expression, the boy looked at Saito.

Something suddenly clicked in Saito's head.

A void user couldn't possibly not know about Founder Brimir. That person before him doesn't seem like some ordinary person who coincidentally shares Brimir's name.

So....

No, how's that.....

How's that possible?

Could it be alleged as impossible?

In a world where magic is a part of people's daily lives.....a world where, unlike earth, magic exists, the existence of 'teleportation' magic isn't impossible.

Brimir himself.

Saito inevitably started staring at the boy before him. …..... A deity-like figure was really human too.

That person happened to be him in his youthful years, is living a regular life.....and is in the era that he lived in.

Right now, he was in Brimir's time.....

That is to say, in Halkeginia, six thousand years ago.

Is this really not a dream?

No.

This atmosphere.

The feeling of these large footsteps.

“What in the world is it?” Both of them looked at Saito.

The founding Void user and his familiar, the Gandálfr.

That feeling that passes through his skin and that motion.

All these things told Saito that this could possibly be a dream.

This is no dream.

“What has seriously happened? What is this anyways? ”

Realizing the truth that would have made people faint a hundred times[2], Saito dropped to the floor in a kneel.

Chapter 4: The Capital of Water

As the day of the third annual coronation ceremony began, Guiche and the Ondine Water Spirit Knights were ordered to maintain order at the gates around the city. Aquileia's narrow alleys were mapped with complicated waterway patterns. All Romalia Pilgrims would be congregating in this tiny place. The Knights being ordered to prevent chaos deemed this as an inevitable part of their jobs.

Packed like sardines in an alley less than 2 mails wide, the flow of traffic became dead slow. Louise and the others, who has to dress up as nuns and start praying from 5 a.m. in the morning in front of St. Lucia Aquileia's Cathedral, were literally in the middle of a battlefield everyday.

Guiche and the boys were armed with (` Unknown clothing here) and bore the responsibility of keeping visitor flow in order. In reality, it felt more like going to war. Romalian Pilgrims pushed and shoved each other aggressively to "line up" at the gates of St Lucia Aquileia Cathedral. With the crowd's erratic motion, most of the pilgrims ended up outside the Cathedral despite their efforts in "lining up".

And so, Guiche and the Ondine Knights were stuck in this position, where they would have to fight with the desperate pilgrims on the verge of a brawl.

"C-Curse you! You shall not pass this line! Stop pushing!"

"Oi, oi, we came here all the way from Romalia! Making an exception here won't kill you!"

"If this calf does not receive the blessings of the Pope, I'm not going back home!"

"Let us catch a glimpse of his Holiness!"

The Ondine Water Spirit Knights took out their wands; using only their bodies to

control the masses did not make things any easier.

"Hey! Scutter off! If you don't want to get hurt then stand back!"

"That's a no-no! You better queue up honestly! Don't you understand speech?"

The peasants unable to follow orders started to turn their fury at the patrolling knights instead.

"Kill them!"

"Y-You bastard!"

Because of the surrounding magic detectors, Guiche, already sweating like a waterfall, issued a ban on using magic to his teammates.

"Everyone! Put down your wands! We can handle them! Don't use magic!"

Except that using the wands to beat the furious peasants only further enraged them.

Soon, Malicorne's wand was stolen in a tug-of-war, and he himself was engulfed by the furious peasants around.

"Waah! Waaaah! Stop that! You plebeians! How dare you!"

"Arrogant aristobrat! Go to hell!"

Guiche and the team were trying to reach Malicorne to help, but were easily swept away by the rioting crowds to be taken aside and beaten in one corner.

"These people! They just won't listen!"

Gimili blinded by anger, activated killing spree mode. It wasn't very long before he started chanting the spells. Guiche, who had his head lifted by someone and was made a punching bag, was in a state of high tension.

"No, stop! I tell you, do not use magic!"

Just at this moment, a group of people wrapped in white cloth burst out from the Cathedral.

"Crusaders!"

No one knows of the legends of how aggressive these Crusaders, claiming the title as Guardians of the Ancestors, could get if you were in their way. Waving the staffs carved with of holy crosses, the Crusaders gathered together and rammed into the crowd.

"An enemy of ours is the enemy of God!"

Hearing this, in addition to the instinctive fear just by seeing these knights of pure white garments, the rioters all fell back and retreated. One of the Crusaders took off his helmet and smiled at the boys.

"Your Majesty Carlo!"

Saving Guiche and the others is none other than the **Carolo Mariano De l'Thrombosine?** who went into a conflict with the Ondine Water Spirit Knights at a tavern in Romalia previously, leader of the Aliesta monastery's Crusaders.

"Whoa, whoa, aren't all of you student knights? Didn't your academy teach you about suppressing rioters?"

All the Crusaders laughed in unison, making Guiche and their ashamed to death.

"Where's your vice-captain? The one with a weird name, what, Hiragana Cratos I recall?"

"It's Hiraga Saito!"

"Ohh, yes, that name. And, where did he go? I don't seem to see him here..."

All of the Ondine Knights darkened their faces. Malicorne replied with a small voice

"R-re-returned to home."

"What did you say? Abandoning his duties to flee cowardly? As expected from a plebeian born!"

Carlo laughed with a big mouth. The rest of the Crusaders imitated their leader

and laughed as well.

"Don't make things up! Our enemy is a large country!"

"That's must be one brave, brave vice-captain."

As soon as his words ended, Gimili stood forward. In case Gimili did something rash, Guiche and Reinard held him back. Guiche said with a low voice

"Carlo, your highness. Have you ever tried facing an army of 10,000 alone?"

"10,000? Don't joke with me. No matter how much more powerful I am, what I can do is limited."

"Our vice-captain did. Not only against 10,000, but against 70,000. At least stop an army of 10,000 before you question his bravery."

Carlo started laughing again. But as soon as he sees Gimili's serious attitude, his laughter soon turned into a bored snicker.

"Huh, just hurry up leave this place. We're in charge now."

Carlo, seeing the exhausted boys leave without another word, added

"Oh, and from tomorrow onwards, you are in charge of patrolling the streets. Remember to report any suspicious people."

The boys felt their blood boiling, but were incapable of complaining. Patrolling was their job now. To them, the harsh words sounded like

"you're supposed to 'patrol', but eventually you'll end up interfering with our jobs. Why don't you go over there and play by yourselves?"

After all, the streets are jammed with people here and there. There was absolutely no space for patrol.

Guiche and the team came to a corner on the center beside the Cathedral, staring blankly at the excited crowds. A few vendors grouped together to sell alcohol and snacks.

"Turns out, we can't do anything without Saito..."

Listening to the shouts of the hawkers, Malicorne sighed. It chimed in resonance with what the other boys had in mind. If they had to rely on Saito no matter wherever they are, the emptiness created by his sudden disappearance just can't be filled by anything else.

"Damn Louise, always so full of herself!"

Gimili made a fist and vented his depression on the ground.

"...But, her feelings I can also understand. Although I am not clear, but that guy probably came from somewhere far away? I remember he came from the east? I'm sure he'd wanted to see his family as much as we did. Besides, Louise, eventually, is a girl. One day she'd be tired of his fighting, I guess."

Reinard stood up and laid out his hands.

"Oi, Oi, how long are we planning to get depressed here? Even if Saito isn't here, shouldn't we devise some plan to make ourselves useful? We should make some achievements to prove that we deserve the title 'Heroes of Albion'!"

A few of the boys nodded in agreement.

"But they won't let us maintain order anymore. We have no more chance to stand out."

Silence fell around them yet again.

Out of the Ondine Knights, Guiche was the only still cheerfully whistling, as if a plan has been devised. On closer look, right next to him is a wineglass bought from some unknown place.

"Why the hell are you drinking, Guiche"

"Eh? Because if this turns for the worse, we'll probably end up in a war. Here, take a cup and drink to your spirit. Here, you try it as well. this is called **Helptakis** cocktail. It's made from mixing ginger and sugar into red wine... and the taste is very concentrated, tastes very good!"

Reinard let his jaw hit the ground.

"How would there be a war! Even Gallia knows the consequences of having a war in this city filled with Romalia Pilgrims. They could become the world's public enemy!"

Guiche slightly frowned

"Ah, yes, that is, what a King with common sense would think.... However, the King of Gallia isn't just anyone. At least that's what I, who have sneaked inside the borders of Gallia, believe. He would never use just any plain, normal tactics.... Arg! I ruined her face!"

"Guiche..., what were you doing all along?"

"Hmm?"

Guiche raised his head, and Malicorne was able to catch a glimpse of what he held in his hands. It was an irrelevant white seashell with the face of a girl carved on it.

"I'm making a necklace. In Romalia, it is very popular to gift females with this time of seashell carving. Since Montmorency is still angry with me, I have to cheer her up no matter what! Bwa-ha-ha!"

Even Malicorne, frowned this time.

"Seriously, even right now, you still have the time to carve seashells? I thought a war is coming? Or do you plan to rely on this and make our companion Saito come back? No?"

"This isn't as worse as how you described it. Although at first notice, all of us were stunned in shock. Even if you keep on emphasizing it right now, it won't help the fact that Saito won't come back. You know, the meaning of being alive, is to enjoy ourselves!"

Guiche responded like he didn't care.

"I really admire you. Such bravery."

Malicorne said sarcastically.

"No... how should I put it?"

"Mhm?"

"To look for answers, yes, exactly."

"Answers?"

"Uh-huh. If I had to face that kind of nightmare like guy, to be honest even thinking of it makes me shudder. That's why I have to do this, to list down all the reasons why I must live on. I must hand this to Montmorency myself. Therefore I mustn't die, ahh-- that emotion exactly!"

Smiling, Guiche poured the rest of the wine in his glass down his throat in one gulp. Malicorne shook his head as if he couldn't stand it anymore.

Watching those two, a sense of uneasiness arose.

"The enemies inside Gallia...I'm not sure myself, but is there such a horrendous guy?"

Reinard involuntarily gulped. Asked, Guiche nodded his head in a exaggerating way.

"Very fearsome."

"Powerful?"

Guiche crossed his arms as he thinks in pain, then nodded his head in the same way.

Little by little, the boys were all around Guiche now, eyes fixed on his face.

"How powerful?"

Guiche and Malicorne exchanged expressions, then Malicorne put up a stand, hinting Guiche should start replying honestly, and kept nudging Guiche.

"Make it clear! Spit it out!"

At last, Guiche answered objectively.

"They have elves."

Elves... to the nobles of Halkeginia, elves are undoubtedly a signature of inducing immense fear.

The faces on the boys changed drastically. Looked at each other, then used feeble laughs to break the awkward silence. Gimili tapped Malicorne's shoulders and ask with doubting eyes.

"That, is it true?"

"You're annoying, that, uh, is really real. We were really defeated by him." Thinking of the battle they had to go through when saving Tabitha, cold sweats burst out from his forehead.

The boys around them stood up in unison, and ran away at great speeds, that only trails of dust clouds could be seen. Guiche was the only one left running behind them yelling

"Waaait! Everyone! Calm down!"

Hearing Guiche's call, some of the boys turned their heads back.

"I'll be here with you all!"

Pointing at his own chest, a cheerful Guiche without a hint of fear puffed out his chest. The rest of the Ondine Knights rolled their eyes in desperation, and started fleeing again.

"Wait up! How do you call yourselves aristocrats!"

Because of this sentence, the runaways finally came back, knelt down and looked up in the sky.

"Forget it..., my last words..."

"So what, it's not like losing is our only choice. Besides..."

"We should stop praying for Saito to come back. For some reason I just know that in the near future he will appear before us again. Right, just when we're

desperately fighting. If we gave up right here right now, won't we become a joke? Anyhow I'm not fleeing from this."

Once Guiche puts it this way, the boys started to hesitate. After all, they are a bunch of young ignorant teenagers.

"Which is why, we should be happier right now. You only get one chance at living!"

As the reasoning goes on, the boys eventually gave in one by one and started drinking, completely blissful from their supposed patrol work.

Gimili's eyes landed on the a small window on the Cathedral across the center. There sat a small Louise in nun clothes. Saddened by the sight, he sighed

"That girl Louise... Even when our morale is at its lowest, she still have the feelings to keep praying.... At least be aware of what we would experience when we'll be fighting with that elf."

"Hey~ Hey~, compared to us, Louise must be more troubled.

"Making the decision to send Saito back isn't something she can do without great courage."

Hearing this, the boys quieted down. Just this moment, a band wearing silly clothes passed by, starting to play beautiful music. Devoted Romalia Pilgrims roared immediately, complaining "too loud, too loud".

Suddenly, Guiche stood up.

"Ahh~ Guiche, where do you want to go?"

"Oh, doesn't really matter. See it's about resting time after prayers? I just thought that we should go and comfort Louise."

At noon exactly, Pope Vittorio who has been kneeling on the altar of St Lucia Cathedral stood up, and bowed towards the crowd outside. Roars of cheers exploded everywhere.

"This ceremony is so great! I am so proud of myself. Even now, I still can't

believe that I was able to become one of the Pope's nun and pray."

Louise claimed happily to the Tiffania beside here.

"It's only because that we are void users chosen by God, isn't it. Even now, I don't feel that I live up to my name... ahh, I must put some effort in it."

Looking into Louise's pair of bright sharp eyes, Tiffania started to question her actions of brain-washing Louise.

Only under her desperate pleads, Tiffania removed her memories of Saito... but afterwards, Louise was like having a fever, suddenly talking about Halkeginia's ideals, droning on and on about her importance.

"Those Gallain conspiracies against us..., we must stop them no matter what!"

"Lo-Looks like it's kind of scary."

Tiffania honestly voiced her thoughts, Louise's eyes immediately shone brightly

"What is there to be afraid of! Although it's not like I don't understand your feelings, you should never bow down to fear! That would be a real insult to God and our Ancestors."

"Mmm, yea..."

Louise looked like a different person. Even if her normal self is so willful... she doesn't have to go to the extremes. Is that why Saito's existence was so important?

As Tiffania was still hesitating, the side door went wide open with a bang and a team of well dressed guys poured inwards.

"Oh! Hello, my ladies!"

"...Who is it?"

In that moment, Tiffania could not identify who the people barging in were at all. They were all wearing weird clothing and had white makeup all over their face.

"Guiche?"

"Ohmyohmyohmy, isn't it lunch time already? Are you ladies interested in a peaceful, quite ride on Aquileia's specialty, the Phoenix tailed ship?"

"Phoenix tailed ship? That sounds fantastic..., however..., if we left the Cathedral..."

"How bad could it be? If you didn't take a break, you would be out of breath from all the work, wouldn't you? Besides, there is no chance of a conspiracy. Look, even in the streets they set all kinds of traps. I Am a earth-base mage and do notice these things. "

Looks like Guiche wanted more than leaving work behind.

"I reckon if they wanted to do anything, they would've marched their army in already. Anyhow, we're here to -slaps back- relax, -slaps back- enjoy ourselves for good"

Unforgivingly, Louise shook her head.

"What are you talking about! Being the sacred nuns, it's exactly now that we should help his holiness. Besides, as soon as we get careless, the enemy will strike. You people should re...Mmm!"

Guiche didn't wait for Louise to finish and already picked her up, chuckling to himself as he walks out.

"Waaaiit! You guys! Put! Me! Down!"

The Louise being compelled to get on a phoenix tailed ship floating in the waterway started to quarrel with the leader of Ondine Water Spirit Knights.

The narrow phoenix tailed ship was filled entirely by the teens, when ashore could their laughter be heard.

"Okay already! All of you, you are taking this too lightly!"

Malicorne, raising his wineglass to Guiche and the others, said

"Keep it up... poor thing. You must be really depressed..."

"What are you talking about? Depressed? Who?"

Louise stared blankly at Guiche. Guiche's shocked face matched his ridiculous clothes perfectly.

"Louise... don't you feel misery?"

"Me? Why would I be? Anyhow, stop this madness already!"

Seeing Louise enraged, Gimili exclaimed

"Are you kidding me! It was because that you insisted, you made Saito..."

"Ahh, my bad my bad my bad my bad."

Louise, after hearing all of this, was still as muddled as ever.

"...Saito, who's that?"

The whole phoenix tailed ship froze in in time.

"Louise! Louise! Looks like it messed up her brain!"

"You people are really helpless..., just now you mentioned..., yes, this Saito..."

Guiche and the rest was on the verge of not being able to hold their breath. This sudden reaction from Louise made the whole boat sway sideways. Finally, Louise couldn't stand it any longer and yelled at Guiche, obviously in fury

"My brain messed up? I'd say Your brains are messed up! The weird ones here are you people. Saito this, Saito that..., what the hell is Saito?"

"N-name, duh"

"Name? That sure is one weird name."

"The male with that weird name Is your familiar, you know."

"Fam-liar? Ma-le? Don't even kid with me! I never had a familiar!"

Louise having said that, crossed her arms in amusement and flung her head to

one side with a "huh!". Guiche looked sideways at Tiffania, twisting around uncomfortably.

Speaking of which..., she once removed Saito's fake memories in Albion..."

Was it that magic?

Guiche knows that Tiffania wields a fascinating magic, which is also the reason why she is not taken lightly by Henrietta and be assigned as a nun of the Pope.

What the magic exactly is, Guiche isn't very clear himself.

Personal experiences tell Guiche that to be involved in these top secrets is never a good idea. They also tell him not to think of even anything correlated. Actually, not to display expressions of thinking them. These things can ruin careers, if worse, you won't be even able to keep your head.

However, in this case, that is completely unnecessary. Staring at Tiffania's face without moving a muscle, is considered a rare way when treating females. All of the boys bulged their eyes.

"Miss Westwood. I have a question."

"Ah, yes"

"...You, don't tell me you used that spell on Louise?"

Tiffania turned her back on him and started to shiver mildly. Guiche snapped his fingers and ordered

"Tie Miss Westwood up."

Excitedly, the boys leaped towards Tiffania and tied her up in a flash. Louise tried to say something, but was tied up as well.

The tied up Tiffania fell down on a side in the phoenix tailed boat, trembling while blushing red.

"Wait! What are you thinking of! Aren't you the personal guards of Queen Henrietta-! What are you trying to do by tying me up? If this continues, I'd get

angry! I'll report it to the Queen who'll punish you."

Ignoring Louise's words, Guiche slowly approached Tiffania.

"You did use magic on Louise, didn't you?"

"Did-did not"

Guiche sighed and snapped his fingers again. Malicorne, wearing a gusset clowns use, started to flick a feather over the body of Tiffania's.

"Would you please tell us the truth, m'lady?"

"Ump! Ummg! Stop tickling! Stop tickling me!"

Tiffania is really sensitive to her body, therefore this torture is the deadliest. Guiche edged his face closer to Tiffania's, who have fell down exhausted.

"Personally, I dislike hurting women. Unfortunately, this all depends on the time and place as well. Malicorne, about whether Tiffania's breasts are real, go and investigate."

"Good suggestion, Captain, what a good suggestion"

Malicorne came closer with his hands reached out

"S-Sorry! I'm sorry!"

At this moment, Tiffania suddenly apologized.

"So that's what happened."

"Because, it's for her own good!"

"Hey, you people, what did you do to Tiffania!"

Facing the agitated and steaming Louise, Guiche gently said

"My dear Louise, would you care to listen to me?"

"Really, what do you have to say! Hurry up and untie me!"

"You have a familiar. He was a person as young as we are. He saved you many times. Also, he really likes you. Did you really forget all of this?"

Hearing Guiche being so direct, Louise is still in the clouds.

"How many times do I have to tell you, I Don't have a familiar!"

"It was on that summoning ceremony in spring. During the summoning, you failed so many times, then you eventually called him out."

"Ohh. Back then, nothing came out in the end. I was really depressed at that time.... But this can be explained. It has something to do with my magic class, although I can't tell you.... Just watch, after this, I will summon the most ultimate familiar in the world!"

All of a sudden, Guiche felt very helpless. Angrily, he glared at Tiffania. He then lowered his body and hissed in her ear

"...Since Louise says this kind of things, perhaps she would be better off this way. ... That must have been what you thought, since she did look very painful

"But because I am a man, I don't think so at all. To a man, memories are the most important things in the world. Since Louise chose it this way, who am I to comment at all."

Following, Guiche took a deep breath

"Still, I cannot accept this."

Hurried by his teammates, the ropes on Louise and Tiffania were finally let loose. As soon as the phoenix tailed boat stopped at the dock, Guiche and the rest jumped off.

Louise, who was left behind, angrily glared at their backs.

"Really, what were they thinking!"

Watching Louise like this, Tiffania fell into deep thoughts as well.

Were my actions right?

Is there no other way than this?

She didn't have the answers to these questions, but she also felt the sadness. Tears dripped from her eyes. Noticed that, Louise started to comfort Tiffania.

"How are you? Are you alright? Really, those guys are too rough! We should let the Queen punish them, don't you think? Tiffania?"

Middle of the night... the glow from the twin moons illuminated the dark night sky.

A few days ago, the warship for the sole use of the Pope, "St. Maricore", was parked at the harbors of Aquileia. A gigantic vessel slowly sailed near. This mysterious vessel retracted its humongous wings. When landing, it did not kept its balance and swayed massively, the giant wings slapping the surface of the sea.

This vessel's remaining momentum was a telltale sign that it is going to smash into the harbor. At this moment, a few folds of wind magic were casted. Large amounts of air blew straight into the ship from the walls, acting as a barrier, such that the harbor wouldn't turn into smithereens.

This enormous vessel porting is none other than the "Orient". The nobles standing guard on the deck casted another volley of wind magics, finally stabilizing this monstrous ship. In the end, few figures of pitch blackness sprung out from the warehouse of the docks, grabbing the harness and tied it around the mast.

Creaking at a sharp tone, the front hull of the ship slowly opened like a crow's beak. This door is made to carry the large loads, designed by Professor Colbert.

The walls of the harbor, procuring out like a tongue which scratched the bird's beak, had an array cylindrical logs laid down side by side. The twenty something nobles stood across those trees, including the ones who were casting wind spells on the deck.

Written on the nobles faces, were all weariness and anxiousness. They really can't be blamed, having to transport and guard such a heavy item all the journey.

A weird, half-cranking, half-creaking sound came out from the bird's beak. A certain object was being transported through magic. The height of this thing was even higher than two buildings..., is the same Panzer Saito saw at the grave underground of Romalia kings.

Right underneath the Panzer, were those logs... the same species of wood of which logs are made from as the ones they would use to transport giant stone blocks a castle is under construction. Only those logs will stand the pressure of the Panzer and roll simultaneously.

"Everyone please take care! Any plain log, even with the 'harden spell' casted on them will not sustain the weight of this steel lump. It weights as much as 120,000 livres!"

So that was the reason, how it's able to withstand the great weight. "Harden" logs over the limit of sustainable weight will snap and be crushed into pieces.

The Panzer slowly slid towards the right. If this continues, the Panzer would fall into grasps of the sea.

"Right side! It's the right side! Hurry up and use 'Levitation'!"

Mages standing left and right started chanting "levitation" to lift the Panzer's right side up. Even with this number of mages, they are unable to buckle it at all. At least the good thing is that it is now stuck in the bird's beak. Professor Colbert held his breath, and carefully instructed mages left and right, eventually successfully landing the tank on the stony ground of the center.

An energy depleted Colbert rested on top of the tank. There was no more to worry, whether the Orient will plummet or will the tank sink into the depths of the ocean. As soon as he is relieved from this burden, tiredness started to reveal in every part of his body.

"It's alright now, Miss Zerbst, Miss Tabitha."

The hatch on the tank sudden sprang open. Kirche's head popped out, wearing a black officer's hat found within. Following, Tabitha's small head partially stuck out of the gunner's window. The two were inside stabilizing the whole tank.

A teen wearing white clothes sharply stood out from the rest of the crowd, wearing pitch black clothing. He gave Colbert a salute. Other than his unmatching attire, this salute was one of a fully professional soldier's.

It's Julio.

"It must have been tough for you, Mister Colbert. If you weren't here for us, it would have been impossible to transport this 'work of art' here."

Colbert jumped off the tank in one leap, and saluted back to Julio.

"Although the Orient was anticipated to carry loads... the loading of this item was a bit more than expected. Having as much as 20 people casting 'Levitation' in turns, it eventually left the bottom of the ship. Otherwise? I don't this ship would have even floated. To me, I hope this is the last time."

Hearing Colbert put it this way, Julio smiled.

"Of course. We don't make unnecessary requests."

Promising that, Julio's eyes darted towards the large oil tank strapped behind the Panzer. It's the same oil tanks that were used to store gasoline for the fighter plane Zero.

"So? Will this thing move?"

"In somewhat way, yeah. It wasn't easy, using 'gasoline' to pilot this 'work of art' and the 'Dragon's Raiment'. Mm, although fundamentally, there are a few big differences. Anyhow, mastering its structure requires time. It's not something that can be done overnight."

"That's more than enough."

Julio bowed.

"And? Using this to participate in the ceremony's guarding work..., isn't that a bit too exaggerated?"

Colbert looked at this lump of metal... and thought to himself

First time seeing this "work of art", it was really shocking. Although the first time seeing machine fly was just as shocking, but the degree of how stunning this was only goes up, not down.

Using such a large amount of metal... steel, made part by part without disturbing the overall organization. Behind, inside the tank was an "engine" even more

advanced than the one of "Dragon's Raiment".

Even the extruding cannon, it's just a perfect work of art. How lethal would a shell fired from here be? How devastating could this get?

The tiny pieces of curiosity gradually swells up, as if hoping to experience this as soon as possible.

However..., with only the power of Colbert, perhaps he might make it move, but for it to go into combat, is definitely out of reach. This needs exactly Saito's power. If Saito isn't here, this is nothing but a giant steel box.

"Speaking of which, where would Saito be? I remember parting with him in Romalia. Has he arrived in this Aquileia yet? I haven't seen him yet"

Julio shook his head.

"Right now, he's on a 'voyage'. He won't be coming back for a short period of time."

"Voyage?"

"Unh." Julio grunted, then smiled.

Traveling at this time of the year? Saito Is a part of the Queen's personal guards. Perhaps he is on a secret mission again.

Colbert made up a story for himself, and did not pursue.

The black clothed males somehow started to transport the tank into the warehouse, hooking the front with a rope to pull with.

The moves started pulling, while the aristocrats applied "levitation" to help out. On the "hardened" logs, this Panzer started to roll again.

Sticking her head out of the Panzer's cabin, Kirche winced her eyes at Julio and Colbert in the midst of some sort of a conversation.

"This really stinks.... Although it doesn't need to be as clean as the streets, it's really dirty and sticky inside..."

Kirche chuckled to herself. Tabitha nodded her head in agreement from the gunner's window.

"Your white knight, where would he be sent this time?"

Kirche pulled of her cap and put it on Tabitha instead.

Chapter 5: Six Thousand Years Ago

But at the same time, his conscious said otherwise.

Brimir and Sasha brought Saito to a village called Nitabelio.

Although described as being brought there, as soon as he walked past the gates, the village appeared before him. With Nitabelio as its name, it seemed to undoubtedly be a prosperous market. With that kind of mindset, he found that what he saw did not fall within his expectations.

It was a small village filled with movable tents placed along the sides of nameless hills. One round tent was made of wood and cloth. On one side of the tent, there were a few goats eating long strands of grass.

The whole scenery looked just like the nomadic Mongolians living in their daily lives—something that he had seen in a community textbook.

Finding his breath taken away by this foreign place, Saito stood there dumbfounded.

“My house is just over there. ”

Brimir led him to one of the highest tents in the village. A blue flag flapped atop the tent's canopy. Wasn't Brimir a founder? Someone like Christianity's Jesus, Islam's Mohammad, or Buddhism's Śākyamuni? Essentially some incredible person! While thinking, Saito entered. He's living in this kind of run-down place? Is this really Brimir himself?

The furniture inside was simple; crude. A thatch bed was placed further inside. A carpet that resembled Middle-Eastern carpets covered the ground.

“But this really shocked me.”

Standing in the house, Brimir excitedly said,

“Where is your master anyways? Near Midagade? I just really want to meet him.”

Saito found himself recalling an animated film before he had seen before. Because the protagonist returned to the wrong time period, he got to directly interact with a hero. "I'm Tokugawa Ieyasu, Japan's first commander general." It seemed that as he said that phrase, he was introducing the Battle of Sekigahara in a friendly manner.

What he could see right now was completely different from that. No matter how he saw it, this was just an ordinary person.

Although, you can't really say that that's the absolute truth.....after all, legendary people are still people. The mere fact that he's in such a place and is seeing Brimir as an ordinary person is far more unimaginable. He should be paying close attention to this.

Saito coughed with an "ahem," then faced those two.

“That's absolutely impossible.”

“Why?”

“That's.....well what you two believe to be a trifling matter happens to be something that I can't possibly do. I actually come six thousand years from the future." He never thought that he would find himself saying something that sounded like it came out of a sci-fi show, regardless as to whether he was on Earth or Halkaginia.

Unsurprisingly, Brimir and Sasha faced each other and laughed. "Hahahaha.”

“What you said was indeed hilarious.”

“Sorry, sorry. I understand how you want you protect your master. Especially during this kind of chaos. Very few people use this kind of "odd system" of magic. It would be terrible if the Valiag knew. Why don't you tell me when you feel like it. “

Brimir laughed lightly.

Odd system was referring to 'Void' right? In this era, the term 'Void' must be non-existent.

“What's the Valiag?”

Saito asked.

“……You don't know? Those guys are a group of devils that employ frightening tactics." Brimir responded with a pained expression.

Saito felt a bit reluctant to believe what he was hearing on the topic of the Founder's enemies....those weren't the elves, who used ancient magic, were they?

“By Valiag, are you referring to elves? ”

Saito's head got hit hard with a “clang.”

“Ah, that hurts....”

“Why would we be those kinds of barbarians? ”

Sasha was put off by what Saito had said.

“They and us are of completely different races. In this wide world's other places.....have completely different cultures.”

“So it's like that.”

Brimir took a hold of Saito's left hand.

That's why I engraved this inscription on her. Gandálfr. In our old language, it means 'the lowly person who controls magic.'

"So you're the one who engraved this inscription. ”

"That's right. Yet your master didn't?”

Saito shook his head. The inscriptions actually engraved 'themselves'. But according to Brimir, inscriptions in this era had to be engraved. “Nope. Although, 'the lowly person who controls magic' ── Gandálfr doesn't actually use magic.”

“That's because you're a mere human. Looks like ordinary humans can actually become familiars. I had thought that only beasts, magical creatures, or creatures of a different race could. Essentially, the magic that she uses isn't what I use.”

“Ancient magic?”

He asked, but Sasha shook her head.

“What's that? Please don't use another other odd expressions. Call it “elven powers” all right?”

Saito began to realize how serious history was. A Gandálfr was 'the lowly person who controls magic.' And the Gandálfr in this era was an elf. He just felt that all of that was a bit hard to believe.

After having stared at Sasha for the whole time.....he felt reality crack, as though he was seeing his own ancestors. Just some kind of indescribable feeling.

“Why didn't you use magic during that time?”

“I didn't want to use elven powers at that kind of place," Sasha said.

“Did you know that to use magic, elves have to learn it?”

“That's a widely known fact, after all.... but what do you mean by the Valiag's frightening tactics?”

Brimir looked at Saito in bewilderment.

“Do you honestly not know about the Valiag?”

“That's right.”

“I sure envy you; there's actually someone on this world who doesn't have the Valiag's shadow treading upon their land. Oh, I understand; your master must be intentionally hiding it from you.”

As though he was very satisfied, Brimir nodded his head. Saito could only watch in bafflement.

“If it's as terrifying as you say.....just what do those tactics look like?”

Brimir shook his head sadly.

“You'll probably understand in a moment.”

Heavy silence fell on the room. Unable to stand the silence, Saito looked around the inside tent. On a normal basis, there wasn't anything attractive. The entrance revealed a child's nosy face, though. A cute little girl that was around ten years of age.

She wore something that resembled a work uniform with a thin brightly colored belt on her waist.

“Lauren, it's fine. Come here. “

The little girl called Lauren, who was holding a ceramic pot, took went over there with small steps. She placed the pot on the stove outside the tent.

“Ah, bring me the Basstelude. Thank you. ”

Looks like the thing called Basstelude w as a object. The girl who brought that took out a wand and began chanting a spell.

“Wow, you are using magic, despite how young you are. Impressive. Is everyone here a Noble?”

“A Noble? I don't really understand what you mean. We are of the Markey race. It's in our blood to use magic. “

Would that mean, everyone living in this town were mages? This situation would have even had nobles shocked! As Saito exclaimed, a young man broke inside.

“Chief! Bad news!

Brimir rose with a thud. The girl called Lauren fearfully gripped the corner of her robe.

“Coming already? That was quick. You've already found this place, haven't you?”

Then, he whisked away what Lauren had brought and ran outside the tent.

“What is going on?” Saito was bewildered.

“They're here. The Valiag.”

Sasha explained.

“Hey, what exactly is this?”

“We'll discuss that later. Just grab this. “

Sasha grabbed a spear inside the tent and handed it to Saito.

Understanding nothing, Saito darted outside. Just who are these feared Valiags? The villages are mages, but their feared enemies are.....?

The village was in a state of chaos. In the empty center of the village, the young man held a staff in his hands, forcing Brimir to gather in the center. As Sasha, and Saito, who was standing on the edge, made their way there, Brimir gave them instructions.

“Lagunaru, stand guard on the west side of the village. Shigulsier, we'll be relying on you to aid the group in the North. Group Brimir, are you ready?”

Ten young men raised their arms.

“All right. Let's crash into the enemies' positions to buy time. Sasha, let's go.”

Brimir ran to the other side of the hill. Saito then followed Sasha, running two hundred meters over the hills.

Seeing the circumstances...., Saito stopped breathing.

Over there.....was an army.

Actually, it would be more accurate to say that it was a scene that would be difficult to describe with 'army'. The number of people involved was unknown. Four hundred metres to the front, there were several organized armies.

At the front were cavalry. They wore frightening horned helmets and chain mail. Following were troops on feet. Holding four meter long spears, similar to model corps, they stood there motionlessly.

“.....That's the Valiag?”

If that was their enemy.....He had no idea how many thousands or ten thousands of people there were. We, on the other hand, only have a few mages. Even if they were mages, they were incapable to defeating such a large number of enemies.

Also, what lies beneath the frighting helmet and armour? As their name happened to be Valiag, Saito had thought that they were ghost-like scums.

Despite having held up against this type of army before, this time's opponents weren't moving, and were organized and prepared for battle. A prepared opponent has no openings. If you directly faced the enemy from the front, you'll get stomped on by the enemy like an ants.

The leading general was riding on a horse. He slowly raised his right hand, then lowered it. The troops slowly moved forward. They stopped every ten steps or so, and howled like beasts.

“That's the enemy? “

Sasha nodded at Saito's question.

“So it's like this? Really, why must the innocent me face these kinds of enemies.....”

While Saito was complaining, Sasha gripped the gun in her hands tightly, never taking her eyes off the enemy.

“Aren't they all fully armed.....just what should we do?”

While he distractedly gazed at the circumstances, Brimir could be heard chanting from behind.

Eoru-Sunu Yarunsakusa-

It was the “Void” magic that he had heard countless of times. The troops before them were slowly approaching.

Osuonu waruyu rado

Louise's "Explosion." But....this should be the earliest form of it.

The Valiag troops reached about three hundred meters from them. The range corps started shooting arrows. For a split second, the sky darkened with clouds of arrows. As soon as they reached their maximum height, several hundreds of arrows were pulled by gravity, aiming directly at Saito and the others.

The wind mage by Brimir started chanting wind magic. That was probably the “wind shield" that Tabitha frequently uses.

Thousands of arrows that flew at them were blown away by the wind magic, one by one piercing the ground around Saito and the others.

Be-ozusu yuru svyuru kano oshiela

Ten seconds later, a storm of arrows was brewed again. The same wind magic was used to blow them away. Around where Saito was waiting, it looked as if it was a rice paddy field from all of the arrows sticking out of the ground.

Along with Brimir's chant, Saito's fear slowly disappeared, replaced by overflowing courage.

The troops were now about a hundred meters ahead of them.

The mounted general once again raised his arm, waving it.

Stationed in the front row, heavily armored troops with pikes on foot cried out loudly in unison and started charging forwards. If someone was able to assault while carrying such heavy armour, are they even human? Just what kind of monster is beneath that armour?

Aaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh! (Warcry)

Thousands and millions of cries echoed across the land————

Sasha nodded at Saito.

Generally speaking, seeing this organized army and hearing their terrifying war cries, people would be too scared to keep their backs straight.

But a Gandálfr that hears its master chanting from behind has no chance of fear.

A Gandálfr is exists for just one reason- to protect their master as they chant their spells.

They are weaponry experts capable of rivaling a thousand troops alone.

“What we see right now is a proper stance.”

Saito was brimming with courage.

Keeping their fighting stances, Sasha and Saito charged over.

The enemies on foot uniformity raised their pikes. As such, Sasha and Saito used the spears in their hands to fend off those numerous pikes. Then, waving off the pikes, they dashed towards the enemy troops.

“Uwah!”

Sasha and Saito were like windmills waving off the weapons on hand. Relying on Gandálfr's power. The enemy troops were sent flying off like scarecrows.

Suddenly, someone's armour got hit off by a pike. Catching a glimpse of the creature below , Saito found himself shocked.

“.....human?”

It appeared to be neither ghosts nor scums; just real live humans. Just how much rough training did these people endure, to be able to run and march uniformly in such heavy armour?

But right now, there was no time to be awestruck. The skilled soldiers had already surrounded Saito, thrusting their pikes like bouys in the sea.

Sasha and Saito were standing back to back, watching each other's backs while shaking away the pikes. Deep inside, they were praying for Brimir to hurry up and finish chanting his spell.

“Is the magic still not done! C'mon! We can't fend them off for much longer!”

Each second they endured felt like a minute under the endless pressure. The

pikes attacked with a whoosh.

Jella Isa Unju Hagaru Beo Kun Iru

“Void” has finally been complete.

Brimir waved his wand at the heart of the army.

A white ball of light started to form before Saito's eyes.....then, created a giant explosion. The explosion engulfed the enemy troops. Rays of light spread all over the place, causing destruction and chaos.

“Uwah──”

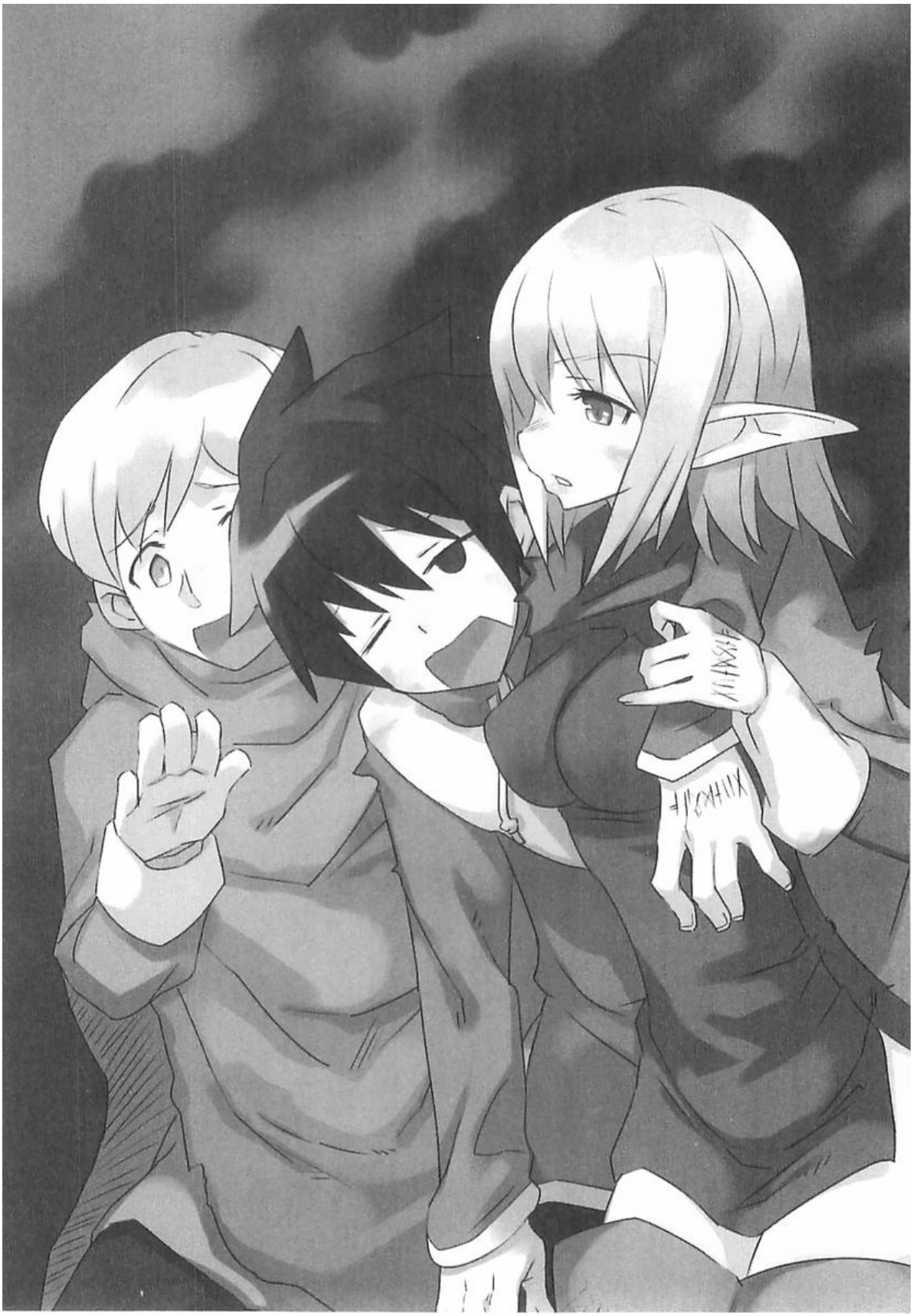
With loud cry, Saito was also blown away by the wind produced by the explosion. The damn situation was like getting swollen up by a tsunami

“That hurts!”

Saito bumped into the ground. For a split second, he nearly lost his senses. While whispering, he supported his body. Looks like he wasn't hurt particularly badly, but his entire body still felt numb with pain.

Suddenly, someone grabbed Saito's wrist. He looked up. A mud-splattered Sasha stood there.

“You also all right?”



“N-no, not good at all……it had unexpectedly wrapped us up in it..... this is even scarier than Louise.....”

“Alas, nothing can be done about it. After all, this was the most effective method.....”

Sasha said without the slightest sign of complaint.

“Look.”

Looking carefully, this place has already transformed into portrait of Hell. Thanks to the gargantuan explosion, the heavily armoured soldiers in front were all blown off. Right now, they were all thrusted into the ground, moaning. Despite having gone through sufficient training, their bodies were inevitably that of a human's. Remaining troops slowly retreated.

“Is everything all right?! I'm sorry! Really sorry! I'll definitely apologize to your master!"

Brimir exclaimed as he ran over to Saito. Saito finally stood up.

"In any case, I'm still alive. Forget about apologizing.....”

“Is that so……I had always wanted to greet your master too.”

“It's impossible. Forget about it.”

“In this case.....I'll just apologize for now, and say these things later. All right, it's about time that that side of the village is done preparing. Let's retreat before the enemy reorganizes itself like before. “

Brimir ran off. Saito and the others immediately followed.

“Thank you. You helped us greatly. Had you not been here, the incantation might not have been completed.”

Even if he himself said they did not consent to it, the fight for control over his master's intentions continued. Is this a Gandálfr's karma?

While thinking about how the situation looks, facing Brimir's back, Saito asked.

“Brimir-san.”

“What is it?”

“Why do you need to fight against those dreadful guys?”

“Because we cannot understand each other."

“So it's like that.....”

As though he was mumbling to himself, Brimir said,

“Humans would fight for recognition. But the me who is recognized hardly does anything for our clan; I lack the power to confront them. However.....the Gods have not abandoned us. I've been granted this unfathomable, strong power,” Brimir ended with a strong tone.

“We will win. Sooner or later, we will win for sure. “

If this was truly the legendary Brimir.....after this, he would go to war with the elves for an unknown reason. In the middle of this, he will then pass away.

This kind of person had unexpectedly turned an elf into a familiar. How ironic. Of course, that cannot be told to Brimir.

Saito attentively watched the Founder of Louise's world's back for a long long time.

After returning to the village, the tents were all packed up. The preparations before setting out were done. It's surprising how something that requires skill was done in such a short duration of time in preparation for retreat.....

This must have been a part of their daily life.

Brimir once again chanted a spell. A gigantic hinged door appeared before their eyes. Even after casting such a big explosion was he able to make such a large door. This man was worthy of being called the “Founder”. His magic powers are unimaginably strong.

…...But looking back at when he met Sasha, he hadn't entered a “different

world.” From the looks of that, perhaps a lot of will power was needed

Freely opening a “door” leading to a “different world” would require some time, wouldn't it?

“Women and children first. Enter quickly.”

The women and children were absorbed into the door. This gigantic door led to some other place. A place in this world where the enemies would not find them.

They avoided the enemies' assaults numerous times like this while constantly fleeing. On this land called “Halkeginia”, for them to be eventually named as nobles, that would require quite a bit of time.

The men have also disappeared through the door. It was finally Saito and Sasha's turn.

“You should go next. Enter, all right.”

Saito gazed at glowing door.

He thought: *Just ahead might be a place that's considered to be holy.* With mixed feelings of attachment and unease though fascinated, Saito entered the glowing door.

Chapter 6: Tiger Highway

Being called ‘Gallia’s spine’ of the Fire Dragon Mountains, the eastern end of the location is extremely interesting. The watershed spanning from the north all the way down south cleanly marks the border of Gallia and Romalia.

At the bottom of the Fire Dragon Mountain, on a piece of the land facing the sea lays the Street of Aquelia.

A street in perpendicular with the Dragon Mountains.

That is what's known as the 'Tiger's Highway', a narrow street located in the valley that is more than 10 leagues long.

Taking advantage of the giant 10 leagues fault line, a bunch of mages created this with their power.

Being the only available path from Eastern Romalia to Gallia, the streets are often crowded with merchants and travelers.

To the left and right of this street are huge cliffs; making daytime and nighttime almost indistinguishable.

Back in the days when this street had just been established, tigers brazenly lurked even on clouded days.... the appearance of man-eating tigers cried out loud for brave crusading teams again and again. Just as their existence was fading, then came the rumors of bandits.

Those who have passed through this street, saw no difference between bandits and the already-gone man-eating tigers, and hence came its name - "Tiger's Highway".

Fortunately, ever since the end of border expansions, even the appearance of bandits have diminished. Only occasional stories of starving bandits trying their luck. Traces of the previous dark impressions had been completely erased.

The two sides of the cliffs have been lit up brightly with torches, even hotels can be found embedded in both sides of the cliffs.

As one of the main trade routes of Halkenia, "Tiger's Highway" represents the symbol of Romalia's prosperity.

At the customs of Gallia, there seems to be some kind of dispute.

"What? Access denied? Officer, what's going on?"

The gate of the customs were tightly shut, piling up travelers and merchants in front of it.

"Orders are orders, just sit tight and wait here for the release orders"

A merchant squeezed out from the crowd.

"Hey, wait a second, if this shipment does not reach Romalia by tomorrow night, my losses will be immeasurable. Are You going to compensate me?"

“Don’t talk nonsense”

The people have the officers surrounded by layers.

“The Third Annual Enthronement Ceremony of the pope is about to end. Do you know how long I have waited for this day?”

"My fiancée is sick, I have to see her!"

An officer raised his staff and said: “We don’t care. We're only following orders from above, as for why, we have the least ideas ourselves.”

The gathered crowd looked at each other puzzled; at that moment.....a cavalry came dashing forward. Before he was even able to get off his horse, he was already flooded by the people.

“Emergency, emergency.”

“What happened?”

“Two fleets has rebelled and are currently marching towards the 'Tiger's

Highway'”

Rebel? Marching?

“Don't joke with me, rebellion these kind of stuff.”

The knight did not reply, but instead looked up to the sky. Northwest of where they are.... a few black dots were gradually enlarging.

“T-two fleets!”

However, unlike the past, the tail of the fleets were not hanging Gallia’s warship flag. In other words, the fleet are not acting on Gallia King's Government’s orders.

“We might as well call them the anonymous rebellion fleet .....”

The gathered crowd all stared at the sky with unease.

“Quick, look, something seems to be dangling under the ship.” Someone shouted out. Under the few dozen ships in protected by other ships in formation, a rope was seen hanging something. On closer inspection, it seemed to be of a human's figure.

"What's that, Golem? Or is it **()** ?"

“They're even brazenly wearing armor!”

Looking at the golem emitting a metallic sheen, the officer's back naturally broke into cold sweats.

The feelings of fear is almost instinctive.

In silence, the watch the fleet slowly steer into Romalia borders.

“What on earth, will happen next.....”

On the decks of what was originally "Charles Orleans", on the charcoaled face, due to long years of services, of fleet captain Claville, expressed signs of confusion and anticipation.

“Don’t understand. I just don’t understand” He mumbled to himself with effort in each word.

Having spent almost his entire life in the sea of air, he could not understand what his lord’s intentions were.

“Pretend to rebel, turn Romalia into ashes.” Was the only order from his majesty. 30 years of service since being a cadet, never have he heard a more simple and yet brutal command.

He is more of a person who prefers to command a battle than politics. Most former colleagues who turned to the political line, are involved in civil strifes, bringing themselves to their own destruction.

Bowing his head, faithfully carrying out his orders..... without realizing, he have already been promoted to Governor.

After going through several large-scale battles, both his fame and experience have gradually risen.

Is this position really suitable for me?

In his mind, these issues often appear.

Duties weren't exactly busy to the point that he had no time to consider these questions.

Time flies.

Just as he was about to retire, perhaps getting a few more medals before return to his own territory, spending the rest of his life hunting or whatever.....

“I’ll give you Romalia.” Was what the incompetent King said.

To be able to get your hands on a country, at the very least, one can lead a life like a noble. No....if it’s a piece of land as large as Romalia, there would be no shame in claiming the title King.

'King'.

An idea that never came across him even once.

There is no sense of ingenuity in it.

Yet, the idea had blew Claville's mind.

“I thought I was a person with no aspirations, no, I’m definitely am....” As if talking to himself, Claville quietly said.

Determining that it was to question himself, Chief deputy Viscount Julian opened his mouth. “After reducing the land to ashes, exactly what kind of regime would be built, our Highness.”

His words sandwiched irony, but not forgetting respect for their king.

“Don’t know.”

“Straightforward, aren’t you?”

“How long have we known each other?”

“More than 10 years already, I guess.”

"From the beginning, I have always been faithfully carrying out orders. Before I knew it, I already hold my position today....if I were to call myself talented, I wouldn't spit a syllable even if my lips cracked. However,..... as for ambition, I can't admit having none.”

Julian replied with a tired voice. “I’m the same”

"Turning what into how much ashes, it'll all have to depend on my strength. A mission of this level, the king wants to mention as little as possible."

"As for whether this mission will end up smoothly? The guest we picked up at St. Maran.... That mysterious woman and the bounded up knight mannequins. For them, they might really turn Romalia into ashes. After all, no matter which way we think of it, the power to command these ship lies completely in her hands."

Claville recalled that King Joseph had a female Magistrate by the name of

Sheffield. That woman exudes an ominous atmosphere. If it’s her, she’d really execute the command word by word, transforming the entire Romalia into ashes without so much of a blink of an eye.

"Not only that, between non-commissioned officers, many people have placed themselves against this operation. However, this is natural... according to rumors, at the capital a Knight of the Roses formed a real rebellion, though it seems it was immediately suppressed. If a fraud rebellion turned into a real one, this will definitely become a good plot for future operas."

“After this, every non-commissioned officers on the ship will be given territory, and the status of the Baron. Julian, you will be the Duke. "

Viscount Julian nodded.

“It’s going to start. Speaking of which……”

“What’s wrong?”

“This conspiracy, I wonder how many lives with it claim?”

This operation does not concern only of war, Claville inadvertently discovered.

This is also a simple gamble.

Whether Romalia will turn to ashes is one.

Whether he is able to become king smoothly is another.

Whether the crew will obey is another.

This kind of despicable conspiracy was unheard of, but, it's too late to get out of it already. The pain of his conscience, is nothing in the face of his just awoken ambition.

"Perhaps I myself, am also longing for this gamble”

Lives include his own, are all thrown into the stake like coins.

Cruel to the extreme, there is nothing worth sparing in this relentless gamble.

“11 o'clock, Romalian fleet." The watchman cried out with a trembling voice.

On the gunning deck of "Harold, Othellon", Second Lieutenant Williams was shaking with anger.

"What's wrong with this, this battle, is there no room for discussion?"

The ship’s non-commissioned officers shared the same mood as Second Lieutenant Williams. Since yesterday, before they have even a firm grasp of the situation, were already ordered to strike, and came all the way here.

According to what they heard, it's to trigger a war between Gallia and Romalia.

“I don’t understand.....why must we fight with Romalia’s soldiers?”

The soldiers all watched their own commander with the same puzzled eyes.

An aide-de-camp descended from the upper decks, bringing news to the confused soldiers.

“Fleet commander ordered that all the soldiers who participated in this campaign will have a special reward after the war. All non-commissioned officers are to be knighted and all soldiers are to be given noble statuses.”

But even so, no cheers could be heard from the gunning deck, everyone looked at the aide-de-camps’s face coldly.

"Over the reward, we'd rather have a suitable explanation. Why do we have to fight Romalia? Is Romalia not an ally of our country? Although it is of our duties to comply orders, this is just too puzzling."

Looking at the questioning Second Lieutenant Williams, the ADC only gave orders “Everyone back into places, we’re about to engage our enemy”

“Enemy, are you referring to the Romalia Army? Why would the Romalia Army be considered an enemy? Between us and them, for what reasons should we fight with them?”

The gunning officer around Second Lieutenant Williams also casted a skeptical

eye to the ADC.

“Why, are we not hanging our flag?”

“T-this is because……”

"'We are now rebelling' kind of rumors are everywhere. How are we going to deny this now! Who excatly, is at the bottom of managing this rebel."

“R-rebel?”

Unrest in the cannon’s deck peaked. Second Lieutenant Williams grabbed the collar of the ADC's shirt.

"Even if we were to rebel, isn't there a standard rebelling procedure, are you supposed to gather all soldiers and ask for their opinions? What exactly are the captain and commander thinking?"

“Insolence!”

The ADC brandished his wand. In unison, 2nd Lieutenant Williams and the other officers all brandished theirs. The gunning deck was packed with tension.

This time, another order rang out.

“R-report, Romalian fleets approaching! All cannons get ready!"

Hearing the report, the ADC put away his wand.

“.....if you have something to say, leave it for later. We should first consider how to survive through this.”

“Damn!”

Unwillingly, Second Lieutenant Williams punched the wall.

The closing Romalian fleet totaled to forty something ships. Though said they're all the newest version ships, they are still far outnumbered by the opponent - a total of one hundred and twenty something Gallian amphibious fleet.

Even so, the approaching Romalian fleet is alerted for battle. Baring their sides,

entering formation, they extended their cannons together.

Shortly followed by issuing their warning.

“To the unidentified approaching fleet. What lies ahead of you is Romalian territory, please immediately turn back. You are entering Romalian territory.”

Towards the knowledge of that the opponent was the Gallian amphibious fleet, the Romalian know completely. But since there was a lack of identification, following protocol was the most sensible thing to do.

Claville repeated the prepared speech: “We are the‘Gallia fleet of Volunteers’. We can no longer tolerate the brutality of the Gallian regime and wish to establish the rightful king to the throne. We hope that we can receive the support of Romalia, offering us an escape route.”

This was an absolutely fictional and completely unrealistic reason.

But, as long as they claim themselves as "a volunteering army for the establishment of the rightful king", then the rules of the Alliance of Kings does not conform anymore. Alliance of all four countries, only functions if everyone is hoping for pacifism.

“We are seeking orders from the government, please be patient”

That answer was to be expected.

So marks the end of standard greetings procedures.

The rest of the plan should be very simple to execute.

Defeat the overwhelmed Romalian army, dash all the way to the ceremonial grounds, drop the "armored dummies"....

After that, they'll have to wait for the orders of female Magistrate Sheffield, who's authority is just below that of King Joseph's.

Out of everyone's surprise, the Romalian fleet pressed forward.

It was as if they had seen through their plan.

“They, already know of our plan?” Julian whimpered with a small voice.

“Doesn't matter. No matter what happens, they’re fated to turn into ashes”

The entire fleet turnedand laid parallel to the Romalian fleet.

“Fire all right cannons! Target, Romalian fleet!”

The order was immediately relayed to the gunners' deck and issued to the other ships via flag signals.

However,regardless of how long they waited, rounds of gunfire could not be heard. The other vessels also stayed silent.

“What, is there a malfunction Go and check.”

The ADC who was standing on one side dashed downwards, just to find himself coming back up with an embarrassed face. “The gunners' deck are rebelling, they refuse to fight.”

Julian smiled bitterly.

"Looks like our existence is destined to become future opera stories."

Claville’s face turned red.

“Deck officers, pull out your wands, follow me to and suppress them."

When Claville was about to rush onto the cannon's deck....behind him came a woman’s voice.

“Commander.”

“Is, isn't this Magistrate Sheffield?”

Claiming a title of King Joseph's personal magistrate, this mysterious lady stood there.

Her body was wrapped with a black cloak similar to the fashion of ancient mages, a hood long enough to shadow her entire face. Her revealing lips, were crimson red like fresh blood.

“Let us down”

“But.....we’re not over Aquelia yet. We're just at the country’s border.”

Claville indicated at the "Tiger's Highway" below.

“That's alright. Time is precious.”

“Wouldn't that be too risky?”

Sheffield started laughing.

“The enemy army is not worthy of being feared.”

Claville was quickly brought back to reality by her smile.

“An order to all ships, cease fire. Release the ‘package’.”

Sheffield did not turn back. For the purpose of sitting on the Jörmungandr's shoulder, she leapt off the railings of Charles Orleans.

She couldn't be seen using any levitation magic, yet light as a feather, only grabbing her sleeves, she floated down onto the Jörmungandr's shoulders. After confirming she has sit tight, Claville ordered the soldiers on the deck to cut the tethering rope.

From the middle of each vessel, many Jörmungandr could be spotted dropping down to earth, all of them carrying oversized weapons such as cannons, large swords, spears so on so on.

Watching this scene from a close distance, one can, amazingly, feel a pressuring aura different from golems, emitting from each one of them.

The gigantic metal bodies all descend slowly. This is probably due to the activation of the "Levitation device" installed within them. If so, then that must be some terrifying power stored within.

According to rumors, the technological advance of these Jörmungandr, involved elves as well....., granting these Jörmungandr hair-raising abilities.

These things can use cannons as easily as if handguns..... even castle walls won't

stand against them.

Plus, imagine this metal puppet swinging its sword. Just how much destruction will each blow cause?

Where on this world would they obtain magic strong enough to pierce the armor of these things?

Through even just imagining, already it sends shivers down one's spine.

The woman.... the one named Sheffield - the female Magistrate directly under his Majesty, is planning to expand a battle that she herself does not understand.

Turn Romalia into ashes.

These may be unrealistic words. On the other hand, with the aid of these murderous Jörmungandr, it might not seem so far fetched after all.

"How the hell did this happen"

Though says he's only driven by desire, he's starting to actually want to help.

He should no longer have any ties with those guys anymore, Claville secretly decided.

Putting the skies one side, on the camps of Romalia, they were the first discover Jörmungandr dropping everywhere from the sky, and deployed troops to stand guard, surrounding the exit of "Tiger's Highway".

Since the inauguration of the coronation ceremony, they have been issued an order, alerting them of Gallian army's invasion, and have been standing guard since.

Originally taking the idea of Gallian army invading as a joke, the appearance of Gallian fleet above their heads turned their heads around completely. What reason would there be, which might, even potentially, cause the Gallian army to invade?

As soon as they cross the border, the Romalian army a new order.

'No matter what class of soldiers it is, wiped them out. If a woman with runes engraved on her forehead is found, capture her alive.'

Even the Captain of the Crusades spoke to himself with a nervous tone. “Those armored puppets that the Gallia fleet dropped.....are golems?”

One by one, the armored puppets rushed over to the canyon sandwiched by the two cliffs of "Tiger's Street".

“By just these golems, they're planning to attack us?” Vice-captain scratched his ears and muttered.

"From what it seems, there aren't any more airborne units.... probably still on top of those ships."

“Now what?” The vice-captain asked

"Ignore them. As long as we take advantage now and take them down one by one. Let’s go” The Captain's voice could be heard overflowing with confidence. There's a perfectly valid reason to support his confidence. After all, under his command is not any squad.

It's a mobile "artillery" squad.

Seeing the two squads of infantrymen heading into Tiger's street, the "artillery" units paused eating grass, lazily stretching their bodies.

They are the "Tortoise Artillery Units".

On the lands of Halkenia, they are a very popular choice for armies.

Contrary to popular belief, tortoises are not species with a slow-reaction.

In addition, tortoises have a large weight carrying capacity, through them, an army can quickly deploy cannons across the entire battlefield. It is said that the appearance of this unit, completely reshaped Halkenia's castle sieges.

Soldiers in charge of steering these tortoises, untangled the rope holding these tortoises in place, allowing "artillery units" to march forward. Heaving cannons on their backs, each step giving a dull 'thud', they emit an antic feeling out of

place with the idea of battlefields.

On the other hand, the cannons they're carrying have nothing to do with the word farce. Less agile golems, if they were to take one of these rounds directly, the result would be scattered pieces everywhere.

Entering the street into around 5 squares on the map, the captain ordered them to stand guard.

This place, of the entire canyon, is the only place where it gets wide. Lined up by buildings on both sides, this forms a small-scaled camp.

Usually packed with people, yells everywhere, have now become empty and eerily silent, the only noise coming from the occasional rustles the squad makes from waiting the enemy.

Around one square in front of them, a blurred shadow of the enemy can be seen. The captain laughed. Probably a team of amateurs, stupid enough to let golems march in such a narrow space without any coverage.

"Ha, this'll be great target practice! Artillery units, load!"

Soldiers in control of the tortoises, popped cannonballs into the cannon. These cannons have a range of two squares. If they want a lethal shot on targets with size of a golem, they must wait until they are in 500 metre's range.

The captain silently awaits for the perfect timing, thinking of putting them down in one go. In the squad, conversation teasing the enemy can be heard continuously.

Yet, as these "Golems" approach them, laughters turned into shocked cries in no time.

"Wearing armours?"

"How are come their motions are so smooth?"

Just by looking at it, the captain has instinctively felt fear.

This is no normal golems.

"Fi- Open fire!"

A result of being blinded by fear, the captain impatiently issued the attack orders.

The artillery units' continuously fire into the narrow space in the canyon, echoing thunderous 'booms'. The tortoises retreated into their shells, acting as a better force against the enormous recoil of the cannons.

Although they aren't completely into the 'lethal' distance yet, the target is locked and they have lots of cannons to spare.

The shells beautifully lands in the middle of the "golem" croud, bring up a thick cloud of dust. Loud hit-confirming clangs of metal colliding together can be heard.

These are, after all, cannons fitted for enlarged shells.

If the golems get hit, they are sure to have limbs flying everywhere.....

And yet....among the smoke, those golems were still progressing as if nothing happened.

“Unharmed!?!?” The petrified vice-captain said.

“Not possible.....that was a direct hit from the cannon? Not even the walls of a castle can withstand a shot from even on round of these artillery units!”

“Next round, fire! Continue! Hurry!”

However, the second rounds never begun. The "Golems" were already in front of them, holding big cannons in their hands.

“Those Golems can run! Are these Golems at all?”

“They have cannons!”

“Wuahhhhhhhhhh!”

Endorsed into a state of panic, the soldiers all hurriedly threw down their heavy armour, pushing one and another for escape.

At this moment, the Jörmungandr fired Their cannons. Hot burning spraying rounds, laid holes in the fleeing soldiers.

After an explosion far more deafening than those of the artillery units subsided, the ground all around where the shell landed looked like a fragment of hell. At such a narrow space, the effect of the power of an exploding shell packed with gunpowder, is not something anyone can stand looking at.

This team, has been entirely wiped out with one shot.

Surrounded by a sea of red flames, the Jörmungandr slowly marched down the street, their figure as if an army of demons bringing hell down to this world.

A lucky soldier who survived the blast by using the tortoise shells as a shield, looked upwards to the passing Jörmungandr and exclaimed "Mon-monsters....."

At the resting room of St Lutcia cathedral of Aquelia, the crowd buzzed as noisy as a beehive. Continuous reports of the battle status from the country's borders have caused these priests to display mixed emotions fear, uncertainty. An aura of uncomfortness veiled the entire room.

The captains of the Paladins have long left this cathedral to stay with their teams camped in the fields. Outside of the cathedral, the effects of the news that the Pope is cancelling his ceremony due the the invasion of Gallian, are even more visible. Spreading like a spark in a barn full of hay, the entire town was in chaos.

In the middle of the crowd of priests, Henrietta stood by herself in the resting room, dumbfound.

Curses flooded everywhere in the room; messengers delivering news that require immediate attention in hordes.

War?

Gallia initiated a war?

The reality, has caused her to doubt her own ears. The "conspiracy" has already been foiled, why would they still need to initiate a war?

A knight, brought news of the standoff between the Romalian and Gallian fleet

above the skies of Tiger's street.

"It's Gallian rebels that are attacking us!?"

Hearing this news, the Generals sitting on one side let out a laugh.

"Why would the rebels attack other countries?"

"Because we rejected their request for an escape"

The generals laughed loudly again.

Even Henrietta, couldn't help but shake her head at this lame excuse.

'So the war eventually began', she sadly thought.

Never did she thought that the Gallian army would seriously go to war carelessly.

She is at a foreign country currently, and have no authority over what Romalia decides to do. The feelings of anxiety yet unable to do anything, burned hotter and hotter every second. Despite she technically still has the Ondine Water Spirit Knights and Louise on hand, they are already assigned a job of guarding the cathedral.

Analyzing the reason for Gallia's sudden invasion, it could be because of the recent provocation by Romalia gathering troops near Gallia's borders.

Only able to do theoretical work, in the end.... she gritted her teeth from not being able to do anything at all.

At this moment, the permanent Gallian ambassador of Romalia, escorted by his own cavalry, showed up with a despising face. In place of Vittorio, the personnel temporarily in charge, the generals, stood up to welcome him.

"This is very unfortunate, very very unfortunate indeed. Traitors of my country, have brought serious disturbance to your country. I hereby, representing my King, apologize. Therefore....."

Completely understanding the situation, the generals declared, without any

attempts to decorate their sentences at all, "There is not a chance of letting your army in our borders to suppress these rebels. We have no idiots here who would open bring the wolves in. You tell your Joseph. Our reputed Romalian elite forces, will completely eradicate every single Gallian rebel."

"What are you talking about, this is my country's rebels. To our country, they are....." Just as the Gallian ambassador was about to continuing weaving more excuses, the Romalian general raised his staff, pointing at him straight in the face. Standing beside them, the priests all cried out. "General, general, what if blood were to staid the cathedral...."

Towards the terrified ambassador, a general said "Apologies, our Romalian Generals are all chosen out of the elite Paladins. Hope you can forgive me for my rudeness. However, please be cautious of your words. To you councilors, words is equivalent to the staff in my hand. Before drawing it out, you must know what you're doing."

The ambassador nodded and shrunk away. Seeing how the general beautifully drove the Gallian ambassador away, the entire crowd erupted into cheers and claps.

Watching this show, Henrietta has finally genuinely felt the meaning of 'The war has begun'

As the door to the Pope's personal resting room has been opened, Vittorio came out leading a band of priests behind him. Henrietta felt a sudden surge of blood rushing to her head, immediately walking in front of him. Holding back her urge of smacking him in the face, the emotions built up within her mind exploded.

"Your holiness! Are you going to take responsibility for your actions? Because of your provocation, Gallia finally initiated a war!"

"MY provocation?" Vittorio questioned with surprise.

"Yes! Because of the placement of your army near the borders, resulted into this avoidable battle!"

"You must be kidding me. If it weren't for my army placement, I'm afraid we won't even have time to discuss right now. It's only because of the army struggling to defend this country, we are able to sit down and plan for

countermeasures."

Vittorio came close to Henrietta.

"For the purpose of 'killing our rebels', Joseph mobilized His army. Isn't the entire event as simple as that?"

In just a few sentences, he had completely reversed what Henrietta believed. Frustrated tears flowed from Henrietta's eyes.

"But, but..... no matter what, there's no need to....."

"You are terribly mistaken, dear Queen Henrietta. This war, is not the product of political affairs, nor is it because of them trying to get the upperside after being exposed of the conspiracy. This is not like the games in court. It is fundamentally different. This war is related to the survival of both countries. There's not enough room for two tigers on a mountain. Being exposed of the conspiracy, is only a part of their plan. War.... is also another part of it.

Henrietta looked at Vittorio in a daze.

To her disbelief, in this Pope's mind..... both compassion and cruelty existed side by side.

"Talks? Mediation? These things are long gone in this battle. Right now, all we can to is to defeat our enemy completely. Being countries of strong power, there is either complete alliance, or total enemies. Other than that, there is no third choice. This matter, if you were to understand is a normal diplomatic issue, then I would be very troubled. More worryingly, King Joseph is probably thinking of the same thing."

Vittorio turned his head to face the general and priests. Speaking of which, all the people congregated in this room, are all the most crucial people of Romalia.

Seeing their state like that, Henrietta couldn't help but ask herself 'Why hadn't I noticed this before?'

'Forcing King Joseph to step down from his throne using the evidence of the conspiracy'

'Elves returning the holy grounds by entering a discussion with them'

If these discussions did not work, what else could they do?

Both sides friendly taking a step back? Don't be silly. If they were able to do this, there would not be anything to worry about in the first place. Vittorio had completely seen through this a long time ago. He must've had planned to resort to war as soon as the diplomatic ties failed. It was only a matter of time....

He once said himself "Believers of Brimir all hope to put a permanent end to this stupid fight."

Ah, from the start Vittorio was aiming for this ideal, using the entire Romalia and its civilians as stake, and began a one-time gamble to settle this all.

He had use all of his chips at once, to finish every single opponent.

"Gallian heretics, have allied themselves with the elves, attempting to destroy us. I, as a servant of God and Founder Brimir, hereby announce, the begin of a 'Crusade'!"

The entire cathedral was covered with deafening silence for a split second, then quickly ruptured like boiling water "Yeaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

'Crusade'

To the peasants of Halkenia, this is a gamble that can affect the rest of their lives, their offspring's lives.

On this world, only the talented are allowed to kill endlessly....

There will not be an ending for this frenzy. From this moment onwards, they have become soldiers who are not afraid of dying for their God and Founder Brimir.

Henrietta’s legs turned jelly and fell to the ground. The 'Crusade' has been announced. Either your survival or mine, never stopping until the complete extermination of the other. The endless, insane war has finally, officially begun.

It is already unstoppable, no one can prevent this war anymore.

This man Vittorio, playing as God in this era, continued and cried out “Gaining victory in the 'Crusade', reclaiming our 'holy grounds' from the hand of the elves. I give blessings to all warriors of God!”

Chapter 7: Aquileia's Saint

The door was pushed wide open, and a Louise in nun clothes appeared. The crowd which gathered outside St Luthia's Cathedral burst into wild cheers.

"Saint! Saint! Saint Louise!" Pope Vittorio standing aside repeated another volley of similar prologues.

"Let me repeat myself. In these days of the coronation ceremony, I am very sorry to announce a saddening news to everyone. Swindled by the devils, our neighbouring country Gallia, on this day before noon, brazenly marched their army into our sacred country. Romalia has joined hands with the United Alliance and returned our attacks."

Radical yells and curses towards Gallia surfaced here and there in the crowd. To Romalia Pilgrims coming from Gallia all hid in the shadows of the narrow Aquileia alleys, shivering in fear. Today, the most unlucky are undoubtedly them, To them, this news is a bolt out of the blue.

"However, to the true believers of Brimir, there is nothing to worry about. Our God and Ancestors have already sent down a 'Saint' to save us all. She is... the one acting as a nun all the time, Miss Louise Vallière!"

"Saint! Saint Louise!"

Cheers went wild yet again. Louise, obviously proud of herself bowed to the crowd. Standing next to her, is a very pale Henrietta and a still shocked Tiffania.

"Hereby, I give her a title, I announce that she will be one of our country's valiant protectors. As she descended on to this sacred ground, we shall name her-
"

Vittorio paused here for a more dramatic effect, then continued,

"The Saint of Aquileia!"

Louise knelt in front of the Pope, her head bowed. Pope Vittorio gave Louise her blessing. At this point, the wild frenzy of the crowd has reached its maximum.

"As long as she is with us, Romalia the sacred country of God, the city of water Aquileia will never perish! Here I wish Louise who will be heading to the front lines our best wishes! Dear God! May you take great care over the Saint of Aquileia!"

"Take great care over the Saint of Aquileia!"

Louise stood up, pleased with herself and waved towards the crowd.

With the crowd's cheers, she slowly build up her courage. The power God gave to her... "Void".

It's exactly this power which made her the Louise she is today.

Because she had never left the side of a prayer book, God has awakened her powers from within.

This magic, shielded herself and the country every single time.

Again and again...

At this moment... her heart missed a single beat. Despite its insignificance, Louise realised something was not right.

Protecting herself and the country, came only from her magic?

What am I thinking of?

Wasn't that the truth? To calm herself down, Louise recalled everything she had done.

Cheated death from the foot of a Golem.

Being betrayed by Wardes at Albion.

Above the skies of Tristain, about to be crushed by the Albion army.

And also, while retreating from Albion, taking orders to stay behind and stand

guard...

No matter which memory it was, there was no one else.

All by using my power, I solved every crisis. That's right. Close my eyes and every time I am close to death, a burst of magical light appears... isn't that solid proof of the Godlike power of the "void"?

However, whenever she thinks of this, her heart would start searing in pain. For some reason, she would lose her focus, as if telling her to find a reason to move forward will then her heart return normal.

Louise brushed her chest slightly. Worried, Tiffania looked at her face.

"... Are you going to be alright?"

"Oh, I'm fine, just that my chest hurts a little. I guess I'm a bit nervous."

Just that moment, the Pope announced to the public, its time to start the "Crusade". Cheers echoed like thunder... but they did not reach Louise's heart.

The people expects.

Wasn't keeping this in mind made her so successful? But why would she be feeling so uneasy? Or putting it another way, why does something feel empty?

Louise discovered in the centre of her heart there was a dark hole of infinite size, threatening to suck her up entirely. She pressed her chest tightly.

"Louise, really..."

"I'm fine. Really, I am. Just that, I want to lay down for a while. That's right, ten minutes would do..."

Deep inside the basement in the resting room, Louise laid down. Henrietta sat next to her, holding her hand tightly.

"I'm really sorry, I'm supposed to head out right now..."

"You must be really scared, Louise. It's alright. It's something everyone experiences. I will lead your knights to head first. You take good rest in here,

OK?"

"No, my situation isn't that bad. It's just... feels like my heart is torn apart into pieces."

"Torn apart?"

"Mm. It beats so fast? Until now, I have never had this feeling before..."

Henrietta immediately understood what Louise was feeling. Having lost a love herself, towards this feeling of Louise's she completely knows it through and through.

"That must be... love! Your love... loss of love, it's what made you so painful."

"Love? You really know how to joke! I've never loved anyone before."

"Yes, that is for the current you. But, the you a long time ago, your heart had a target. Even though you try your best to deny it... not wanting to accept it."

Henrietta's faced showed painful sorrow in it. Tiffania did too good a job at erasing "Saito's memories" out of Louise's brain.

Except... her "feelings" for him were still left behind.

Like a mail without a recipient, the emotion right now is torturing Louise's poor soul.

"I... if there was that kind of 'love', then it should be the love towards the people of Halkeginia's. Your highness, please be proud of me. I am already listed as one of the great protectors. The one taken lightly, jeered as Zero Louise... is now the 'Saint of Aquileia'."

Though she says, she still show signs of pain.

"Other than standing in the list of great protectors, there's another beautiful thing in this world." was what Henrietta wanted to say to Louise. But... what good would it do? Louise's love has already lost its target.

Other than being a saint right now, is there another choice to choose?

"Saint Louise your holiness! Everything is prepared! Please ready yourself to travel!"

A knight said to Louise.

Louise, still holding her chest, stood up.

"father, mother, my dear sisters will praise me when they hear of this news. I, feel very proud."

Smiling, Louise headed out of the Cathedral.

The Henrietta being left behind, found a sobbing Tiffania in the corners. Henrietta walked up next to Tiffania and held her hand.

"...I, I did a terrible thing. It was painful enough already, now it hurts even more..."

"You still haven't loved any yet, have you? My dear cousin."

"Th-that's right."

Tiffania nodded her head.

"If that's so, then nobody blames what you did."

Henrietta peeked into the Cathedral from the crack in the door of the resting room. Is it because of the Crusade? With Priests as their leader, believers following from the behind, praying diligently to the figure of the Founder.

Being Henrietta, she also prayed to it from dawn til dusk once. But now is no time for this.

It's time to pull the curtains for the "Crusade".

To put a full stop on the unpreventable war, Henrietta starts to consider the things she can do.

"'Eliminate the enemies at Tiger's Highway' is it... That's easy for him to say."

Malicorne whined painfully. Beside him, the Guiche on a horse fell into deep

thoughts. Behind them followed a bunch of worrying knights, alerted to every minor details...

A distinct expression compared with the bright glowing sun.

Today... after receiving the guarding duties at the Cathedral, the report finally came.

An attack towards the "Gallian Rebellions".

Though it reads the "Gallian Rebellions", it actually meant King Joseph's gigantic army.

Above the city skies, the two Gallian fleets and Romalia kept exchanging attacks.

As the Romalia ships are at an obvious disadvantage numerically, they were the ones continuously attacking. Yet for some reason, the two Gallian fleets did not return any attacks back.

After hearing of this situation, all the units standing guard around Aquileia were issued an order to attack.

Guiche and the Ondine Knights, on the other hand, received a special order.

"To guard Miss Louise Vallière- 'the Saint of Aquileia' as she chants her spell."

Louise's magic seems to has a special effect, everyone still has a fresh memory to the magnitude power. Last time when retreating, wasn't Louise the one ordered to stay behind and stand guard?

Somehow sometime, the Zero Louise transformed into the Queen's Louise, now she's assigned by the Pope himself as the Saint of Aquileia. This is really like the frog in Princess and the frog.

Different from those being assigned to pave the road, the cold sweat covered Ondine Water Spirit Knights had a different objective. Louise carries a fearless face all the time, although part of it looks like a forced face.

Tagging right behind are two teams of Crusaders. The teams are Carlo lead

Crusaders of the Aleida missionary. After That, is volunteers from the pleasants.

All of these add up as Louise's personal guards.

Looks like our 'Saint of Aquileia' is the main strike force of today's battle.

Louise was literally shining, droning on and on about the importance about being the strike force of the entire battle.

"It's such a glorious thing. You guys think so as well, don't you?"

Malicorne agreed with whatever she said.

"The glory, oh the glory, how glorious it is. To be in a 'Crusade'."

"Agreed. This is so~ fantastic! We are the sacred representatives of the Holy country. Let us teach those arrogant evil-doers elves a lesson!"

"You speak as if this is a game."

"What? Why are you angry?"

"Under whatever circumstances, the only people who are happy about having a religious war, are only those priests and the crusaders. You, do you even know what a 'Crusade' is about? Claiming to fight for our God and Founder Brimir may sound grand, but in reality this is a fearsome war which won't end until the Holy Land is reclaimed. Absolutely no gain can come out of this! The lives and money our ancestors spent in their 'Crusade', do you need me to lecture you about that?"

Guiche nodded his head approvingly.

"Calling ourselves the descendants of our God and Founder Brimir, I will gladly dedicate my life for Halkeginia without hesitation... but everything has its limit. I was already wide awake when we considered elves as our opponents, but to start a Crusade!"

"What are you talking about! Are you chicken? People like you call yourselves nobles of Tristain!? Do you not want to do great deeds here, reclaiming the Queen's and the Pope's trust?"

"Who is going to protect our titles if we are all dead!"

Carlo quickened his pace and interrupted into Louise and Guiche's conversation,

"God will guarantee it. God is all-knowing. If we die in this Crusade, our souls will be sent to Heaven. There, we will join God's army. Is there a more grand title than this?"

The Ondine Water Spirit Knights, hearing to the Crusader's confident voice, showed faces of awkwardness in contrast. Hearing other people talk about "Heaven" in such a straight face makes them feel awkward.

"Just as what Carlo said. Even if we die in the war, we will become Guardians of God himself. God is surveying us in this Crusade, hope for us to reclaim the 'Holy Land' someday."

"A magnificent description, Saint Louise."

Louise's eyes was never so bright before. Continuing with an obsessed tone,

"I... feel very proud to be part of it here. Rated as having no ability in magic, zero here and zero there... even a person like me was able to be on the front lines, for God, for our Ancestors, for Halkeginia. There is nothing else more glorious than this, no other day more magnificent. Even if I were to die here, my soul would live on forever!"

"You are Aquileia's... no, Halkeginia's Saint. Rest in ease, we will fight to buy time for your spell, even if it will cost me my life."

The Ondine Water Knights coldly listened to the obsessed couple's conversation.

"If so, unveiling our most treasured saint for the first time, the Pope his Holiness sits pleasantly watching in Aquileia? Wasn't he the one who insisted on, invading in their camps, massacring all the enemies?"

The Gimili silently listening til now spoke loudly, but was met with Louise's and Carlo's wands instead.

"That's Very disrespectful."

"Disrespectful"

"Sorry... no, Deeply sorry. I was only a little concerned."

"How could we let his Holiness brave such danger! As long as his Holiness is alive, no matter how much times, Halkeginia can be reborn from the ashes! Even if pushed to the end by elves!"

Louise made a fist, tight with determination.

"Over being a Saint, Zero Louise is much better," looking at her face, Malicorne whispered with pity.

"Because Saito isn't here, look at what Louise turned into," Guiche muttered, wearing a pained face.

As the army progresses, on the other side of the forest an intimidating canyon can be seen. The giant cut suddenly interrupting the Fire Dragon's Valleies... is exactly "Tiger's Highway".

In front on it, numbers of armies can be seen covering the entrance. That is a strategic positioning temporarily set up. Looks like the influence of the enemy has already seeped through the canyon.

Confirming Louise and the following army, a knight came out from the camp to greet them.

"Commander? Is the commander here?"

Louise suited in a nun's clothing stepped forward. Using a noble's attitude, and waved.

"Oh~! You must be the Holy Saint the above mentioned? Must have made thou waited!"

"Do you mind describing the situation here?"

"Yes! The enemy out there is golem-like, in armours of total height around 25 metres. We have seen so far around 10 of them. Already this is an impenetrable force... the first team sent forward are all dead. All Dead! Right now, to scout out

the surroundings, we have sent another small team..."

That instance, black smoke poured out of "Tiger's Highway", followed by explosions which sounded like grenades.

A soldier tried to report with empathy.

"Looks like there were no survivors."

"We'll take care of it from here."

After having said that, Louise gave a sign indicating the army to begin assault. The soldiers who were guarding the entrance all cheered for the sake of Louise.

"Aquileia's Saint her Holiness! Hurray!"

"Our dearest Saint! Destroy them all!"

They then split into left and right, paving a road for Louise and her army to the canyon.

The wide gap of Tiger's Highway was as if a giant dragon capable of devouring everything thing offered. The dangerous looking cliffs had sharp protruding rocks, like teeth that can rip everything apart easily.

Staring at the deepest parts of the black smoke, Louise gave orders.

"Someone, bring forth the enemy here. I will defeat them will one blow."

Carlo nodded his head, then signaled for Guiche and them to move.

"That means you. Get going."

Pointing at the black smoke, still rolling, full of gunpowder smell, Guiche said,

"You mean we jump right in the middle of That?"

"Of course. We have the important duties of guarding Saint Louise her holiness. You people just cannot substitute. That's why you must do what you are only capable of. Now thank me for it."

Hearing how he said it, the Ondine Knights were enraged.

With Gimili's wand leading, the boys brandished theirs uniformly as well.

"When Nobles order us to go 'suicide', there is a special method to treat them. You bastard!"

"Now's not the time to hide and fight each other!"

Louise yelled.

The Crusaders also revealed their swords unreserved, this time Guiche came forward to relieve the tension.

"Everyone, put down your weapons. Just as Louise said, it's not the time to fight."

"If you understand, then move!"

Guiche then turned to the manipulating Carlo.

"Before doing our mission, there is one time, can you answer me honestly?"

"Go on."

"Then, forgive me for being so direct. I don't not like what you do. We are Brimir's diciples, are also the nobles of Halkeginia. If the Pope declares a crusade, then we will do everything in our power to help. However, when journeying this land, I caught a glimpse of hell once. Those who only know how to put on airs, including me, when facing real challenges will only lose their balls. Which is why, I am not as capable as you people. How should I put it, really hope what I said will only happen in dramas."

Carlo went alarmingly red, angered for some reason.

"Enough!"

"Guiche!"

Louise also called out.

"Louise, please promise me one thing."

"What?"

"Stop acting dumb! If you are in danger, give everything up and flee. Did Saito said it before? To die for the cause of God or glory is the stupidest reason. When I first heard, it sounded like a chicken's excuse. Now I finally understood. If you die, everything you've lived for is in vain. No matter how hard it is, survival is the most important. That is the real glory. If I let you die, Saito will curse me forever."

"Haven't I asked you? Who the hell is this Saito?"

Guiche ignored her and faced forward, raising his wrist.

"Forward!"

The teens followed him one by one. Malicorne muttered interestingly,

"Hohoho. If it were to die for God, I'd pass.... but if it were for a friend's lover, maybe it doesn't sound so bad. How troublesome."

Gimili followed.

"That can't be helped. That kid Did saved us quite a couple of times."

Reinard pushed his glasses back up and asked.

"So, Captain. Facing such a terrible enemy, can we make it?"

Hearing so, Guiche said solemnly.

"Relax. I am here."

This time, no one planned to run. After all, they are nobles.

"Ahhhhhhhh!" Screaming, Saito woke up from his dream.

Taking deep breaths, he surveyed his surroundings.

"Where is this place?"

This is a room... a dark room made from wooden walls. Himself lying on his own bed. But were he should have been, was with the others inside where the gate Brimir made, led to...

What in the world happened, Saito had no idea at all.

"You awake?"

Twisting his head in the direction of the voice, he saw Julio on a chair, looking back at him.

"Jesus! Why are you here!"

Having said, Saito shook his head in disbelief.

"-Sighs... From what I am seeing, was that a dream..."

"Dream?"

Julio reviewed Saito curiously.

"Oh, that was a really weird dream... Don't laugh at me."

"I won't."

"I just dreamt I traveled back in time to 6000 years ago. And also, I met the one you call as Founder, Brimir. I also met the previous version of Gandálfr."

"Mmm~Mmm."

"What surprised me was, the original Gandálfr was actually an elven girl! We also fought against an army. What a joke."

Julio gave a faint smile.

"That is, one weird dream."

"I know, right? But that dream really seemed like it was alive... Ahh, it's good to wake up. Speaking of which, where are we right now?"

"Inside the city of Aquileia."

"Ohh? I heard this is the place that Pope is going to hold his third annual party...?"

"Third annual coronation ceremony," Julio corrected.

"Whatever. Wait, why did was I drugged and revived again? Planning to escape?"

"No, not that."

Then, Saito's expressions darkened.

"And? What happened with Gallia? How about Myozunitonirun? Did she do it?"

"Uh-huh."

"Seriously.... If that's so, we don't have time to sit around reminiscing...! Wait... what did you say!"

Saito jumped out of bed, pulling at Julio's collar.

"Gallia sent two fleets full of those armoured golems from before, they started invading Romalia and the United Kingdoms. Right now at the border a serious battle is going on."

"What! Where's Louise and Guiche?"

"They have gone to the front lines. They should be arriving by now."

"Can't wait any longer!"

Saito put his hand on the doorknob, attempting to open the door... but his efforts were in vain. The door seemed to be locked.

"Oi, Julio! Open the damn door!"

"Ha, take it easy. Since you are awake, we cannot abide by our contract with Louise anymore."

"What are you talking about! Leave these things for later! On that side they may be having a battle right now!"

"They Are. However, a contract is a contract."

Julio stood up and unlocked it.

"...You jerk, if you can unlock it, do it earlier."

At the instance Saito opened the door, he couldn't help but gasped.

"..."

Outside... was another room, a bit cramped like the camps for monasteries. In the centre, ancient desks and chairs were placed.

However, Saito's eyes were looking at none of these...

It's a "Door".

Glowing brightly, a mirror like door.

Saito had seen this magical gateway many times.

Like in the dream just now.

As well as in the second time being Louise's familiar.

"That, that's..."

"A door to the world. It a magic which connects directly your world and ours."

Looking aside, there stood Pope Vittorio, smiling gently.

"The contract... is it...!"

"You are absolutely right. Miss Vallière requested me to send you back to your world."

Louise requested? Why?

An epiphany came to Saito. It must be because Louise secretly saw him crying when reading the email his mother sent, which made her want to send him home.

Saito's chest started to radiant.

That last smile... so this was what it meant?

The Louise... is on the battlefield right now.

"I'm not going back! Louise is fighting with enemies right now!"

Despite saying that, Saito's view were fixed on the door. Probably because it opened up, and the contents started to fade in...

When the other side can be seen, Saito felt his whole body shake.

"This is made for you specially, the 'World Door'. Being able to connect to that position, is a reasonable thing."

How could this be possible... Saito thought, his strength leaving him.

This is what he dreams of, is reminded of day and night... his own home.

Kneeling helplessly, Saito stared. The concrete made walls, concrete covered grounds, flower pots placed in home...

The cheap wooden door, the stainless steel doorknob...

This is a sight seen everywhere in Japan.

But to Saito right now, this is better than any magnificent architecture. Uncontrollably, he took one step forward...

And paused firmly on that single step.

"...I can't do it. Because Louise... everyone is fighting. Why am I the only one who can go home!"

"How you choose is completely your choice. However, please make your decision quick. My energy is limited. This door will only last for 10 more seconds of so. Afterwards, I won't be able to focus enough for anyone to pass through. It's your last chance."

Facing the sudden decision, Saito's heart shuddered heavily. Pass through this door, and he will return to his desired homeland. Unfortunately, this would also imply a farewell forever for Louise and those friends.

I like Louise and everyone else.

Yet, his home in his reaches, this was unimaginably attractive.

The words of Brimir suddenly surfaced in his head.

"People, all of them fight for their homes."

He did say that.

"Their homes..."

The vision in front of him triggered a unlimited amount of memories he had. Wait for his best mate to go to school together, the friends coming over to play after school. Barging out the door to get to school in time. Learning how to ride a bicycle when small. Practicing curving a ball at the wall.

All these subtle events were awakened. Yes this is once where he lived.

"My home..."

While still indecisive, his left eye view was replaced by another door.

That was Louise's point of view. It's an ability activated when his master is in danger.

In the vision, he can see a large canyon.

Also, rectangles and rectangles of armies.

Suddenly, great smoke rolled out of the canyon. Guiche and the other Ondine Knights appeared in view as well, all of them a terrified face.

Louise then appeared to walk forward... into the pitch black smoke warranting great danger.

The battle had begun.

With this picture in sight, Saito stopped his walking again.

"...How can I go..."

Incidentally, life always plays around with you.

In the world door, another view showed up.

That instance, Saito felt time pause.

Seeing the person inside, tears fell so easily out of his eyes.

"Mother."

The mother on the other side, looked almost the same as one year ago. No... perhaps a bit of weariness. For the first time in Saito's life, he had seen his mother, exhausted.

His mother obviously caught sight of the shining door in front of her, widening her eyes in shock.

"Rest assured. The other side can not see us here. The door is only one way, so she cannot enter. This would look nothing more than a shining mirror."

In his left eye, Louise's vision. His right, his waning mother.

Behind him, Julio's opened up.

"Left or right? Choose, my brother."

Saito put his hands in front of him.

Through this, he can see his mother. With his dearest mother.

All sorts of memory tangled in his brain.

Getting a good grade at school and being praised for it.

Breaking the neighbour's window and scolded for it.

The smell of fried eggs, miso soup. Also the fried fish he rated is disgusting...

Being reminded of how he should keep up in school.

Back then, he only considered his mother as annoying.

Slowly, Saito held his hands tight.

The door began to vanish from his sight.

Saito only rubbed his eyes.

The Julio standing behind him, finally let out a breath, and quietly put down the

handgun pointed at Saito's head.

Saito turned around, traces of tears gone already.

"Where is my sword and 'weaponry'?"

"Is that ok? This might be your last chance, you know."

"Don't make me repeat myself. Bring me my sword and 'weaponry'. Also, where is Louise and the others."

"10 miles north of Aquileia, entrance of 'Tiger's Highway'. If it were your plane, it would take around 30 minutes to be delivered."

Julio's words made Saito furious.

"All of it were planned, wasn't it? You did this on purpose."

Then... Saito noticed the gun on Julio's hand.

Julio, not showing a hint of being apologetic, and said,

"Don't mistaken us. What we only need, is the inscription on your left hand. Not you as a person."

Saito realised. This a-hole. If he'd passed through the door, he wouldn't have hesitated pulling the trigger.

"You..."

Julio hid his face of considering his as an idiot, something he rarely does.

"You are really a slow person. Other world? Returning there and the contract will disappear? Unfortunately, our destiny isn't something that efficient. They only thing that can make magic lose effectiveness, is only 'Death'! That's right, to survive, we have to do everything. Do not forget. In this family of 'Void's familiars', there is only 'master'. Remember this well, brother. Our 'home' lies 'Here'. Otherwise, we will never reclaim the holy land."

Saito made a fist. Fury made his shoulders shake violently.

"Remember this, one day I will beat you to a pulp."

Julio smiled.

Aiming at his smiling face, without worries, he punched with all his strength. Julio did not evade either, taking all of it, then flying backwards, landing on a door.

On the floor, Julio said,

"Leave this building and you will see a warehouse. Your 'weaponry' lies inside."

Saito pushed the door wide open, but stopped his motion.

"Your holiness."

"What is it?"

"Can you, open the world door again, no matter what the size?"

"What is it? Still thinking about home? Weren't you the one who decided not to leave?"

"I only need a very small door. Around the size of a finger would do."

"Then let me try. That size, I should be able to manage."

Chapter 8: The Steel Tiger

"Those guys... taking their time so slowly... what are they doing?!"

This was the Inn Street of Tiger's Highway. In this emptied place, Sheffield ordered the Jörmungandr to stay alert.

She placed a light blue monocle, a magical tool, in front of her eye. Every Jörmungandr's vision was shown through this monocle. Using this tool, Sheffield could manipulate ten Jörmungandr as swift as if she was using her arms.

An hour already passed since the landing. Romalia put up quite a bit of a fight; hence, all of the Jörmungandr’s ammunition was depleted.

To effectively eliminate the Romalians, only using the "swords" they carried was not enough. Even though the Jörmungandr had "reflection spells" cast upon them, enemy attacks still could not be completely deflected.

If the attacks continued for a while, ultimately the "reflection spells" would fail.

To cease the firing of enemy guns and magic, long ranged weaponry was definitely needed for the immense golems.

Resupplies of ammunition were supposed to be parachuted down from Gallian ships.

Incidentally, the guns that started firing not long ago from Romalia’s ships still haven't stopped shooting yet. Despite Gallia’s obvious advantage of having two fleets, one third of the ships has rioted and refused to engage.

In the end, the disorganized Gallian fleets accepted the showers of cannonballs with open arms. Even though the Jörmungandr needed more ammunition, resupplies never came.

If the supplies did not arrive soon, Gallia would be in quite a bit of trouble.

However, lack of ammunition was not the only problem. “Wind stones” were also needed. With the elves' assistance, Gallia manufactured these stones since they are the power source for Jörmungandr. In other words, the "wind stones" were required for the Jörmungandr to swiftly swing their beefy armored arms. If these stones were used up, Jörmungandr could hardly even move an inch.

So, if this continued, no matter how powerful these armored golems are, they would not escape the fate of becoming big useless lumps of metal. After an intense battle with the Romalian forces, the consumption of wind stones was sky high. Though Romalia’s armies suffered great losses themselves as well, the fact that the Gallia’s side lacked supplies was still nothing to be happy about.

Because this mission was not just to make them suffer, but to eradicate them all.

If this could not be achieved, then burning Romalia into ashes seemed like a complete joke. Since Joseph expected Romalia to be incinerated, Sheffield would not hesitate to do so.

With the aid of the Jörmungandr, Romalian armies dispersed across the country are no more than sitting ducks. That's what she thought.

However, Romalia focused all of its troops to the two countries' border.

Even so, she still needed to accomplish her task. If she did not, there would be no value for her existence anymore.

In the field of vision of a distressed Sheffield, a ship broke off from the enemy fleets and was flying towards here, most likely to survey the Jörmungandr from above.

Sheffield's crimson red lips twisted into a sinister smile.

She waited for the ship to sail just a bit closer.

When the enemy ship was around a hundred mails above ground, Sheffield ordered two Jörmungandr to join hands and crouch.

Another Jörmungandr stepped on their hands, and the two flung him up into the air.

The Jörmungandr leaping into the air, climbed onto the survey ship like a spider. They never would have dreamt of such a large golem to be capable of 'leaping'.

For a ship that was completely filled out with guns and cannonballs, withstanding the weight of a Jörmungandr was absolutely unreasonable. Subsequently, it fell down from the sky. As soon as it crashed on the ground, ten starving Jörmungandr ripped the ship into pieces, searching for precious wind stones.

As if eating peas, the stolen wind stones were all crammed into their mouths.

Afterwards, they took the cannons from the ship. They also stuffed cannonballs and gun powder into their pockets. Sheffield smiled at them lovingly.

"Incredible. That golem actually flew into the air and brought down an entire ship."

Reinard sighed.

The Ondine Water Spirit Knights, waiting in Bella's underground cavern, watched all of this happen. Holes were created just large enough so that the knights could pop out their heads. Of course, their heads were covered by their capes, along with some soil on top.

What a well planned disguise!

Through the small cracks, the boys peeked at the situation for almost thirty minutes.

Their job was to "lead the enemies to Louise who is waiting at the entrance". In reality, they had no idea how to commence it.

Guiche frowned and corrected Reinard.

"That is not just any golem. I remember seeing one similar to it back in Albion."

"Was it powerful?"

"Magic is ineffective. It seems that those monsters have some strange elven spell cast on them. The only thing that works against them is Louise's magic."

The teens' faces instantly became sickening green.

"Then what do we do?"

Guiche was irritated. If they attacked without a well thought-out plan, they would probably end up in torn into shreds from either the gigantic cannons or the frightening swords. Magic doesn't work on them either.

"If we keep waiting, eventually these monsters will head to Louise, I guess?"

Gimili pointed out.

"No.... they'll probably take another path."

"There are cliffs left and right. How is there another path?"

"With their agility, can't they climb over the cliffs? Besides, those guys obviously know that the Romalian army has the entrance surrounded. They aren't idiots. They're probably waiting for assistance from the fleet. Once the fleet assists them, they'll attack directly to get through our defense."

Reinard gave his point of view. Guiche nodded in agreement.

"True. On the other hand, if they can't wait for assistance..."

"If it was a normal commander, he would choose to go around, or wait until the fleet ends its battle. What will our opponent choose to do?"

Malicorne used a 'distant-viewing' spell and observed the sky. With this spell, he understood that the war was going on slowly. They did not look like they wanted to win at all. From a distance, it looked like the battle might actually continue for another decade or so.

"It doesn't look like any side would win."

Reinard was right on target. The armored golems, using their fingerlike nails, stabbed their chubby fingers into the strong walls and started climbing. They looked like they planned to travel along the mountain range and attack from the army's side.

"The cliffs are over 200 mails tall! These things really plan to climb up?"

"Looks like they're serious. And with such hand coordination.... they look just like acrobats at the circus."

Many Jörmungandr climbed slowly, seemingly enjoying themselves. The spread out Romalian army pointed all their guns at the entrance. If flanked from both sides, they would definitely fall into chaos, and Louise's plan would fail horribly.

"It looks like we have no choice. Better draw their attention now."

Guiche kissed Verdandi beside him. Because he looked so serious, the teens all covered their dried mouths. Kissing a mole wasn’t really a romantic scene at all.

"If I unfortunately die, Verdandi, take this to Montmorency. Do you get it?"

Cutting off a part of his hair, Guiche handed it to Verdandi. Like saying "no, no", Verdandi shook her head with watery eyes.

"Leave me smiling. I am a noble."

With this scene in sight, the teens all gave their familiar parts of their hair and conveyed their last messages to their family and loved ones.

"Reinard, tell me your plan."

Guiche declared without flinching.

"Plan? What are you talking about? All we can do is use magic to attract their attention, then fly away using levitation. If they're willing to listen to us and watch our show, then that's more than enough to please me."

"Sweet. Let's go."

Guiche leaped out of his hole and waved his rose, creating golems. The boys all casted their respective magic spells.

The armored Golems that were climbing up were bombarded by magic-made explosions, but remained entirely unhurt. The Jörmungandr turned their heads without hurrying.

"Idiots! We're down here!"

Guiche kept trembling with fear, yet never stopped yelling at them. Two Jörmungandr slid down swiftly, firing their big guns.

"Wind magic."

The wind mages of the cavalry had already casted a magic barrier protecting them, beautifully blocking the giant shells and reflecting them away harmlessly.

Guiche and the others cast their spells separately, provoking the enemy. Guiche's copper Golems, as if teasing the enemy, stood in front of them while making all sorts of weird signs and movements.

"Hey! You God-abandoned Gallian bastards! We've been sent here to have fun with you! Come on at us!"

The two Jörmungandr, wielding swords of unprecedented size, walked towards them, making cranking noises with each step.

"They're taken the bait! They've taken the bait!"

"Everyone, retreat!"

Guiche and the rest cast levitation and began to flee. Flying in the air was apparently much faster than the Jörmungandr's walking; therefore escape might actually be available...

"Watch your speed! Don't go too fast or they might give up chasing us!"

The armored golems would occasionally stop and fire their guns. The shells were all grape shots; these shells released multiple smaller artilleries when fired.

Though hitting aerial targets was difficult for the Jörmungandr, Guiche and his fellow knights were still made out of flesh and blood, so the grape shots were definitely not a good thing for them.

"Ahh!"

Guiche's shoulder was hit, pouring fresh blood out immediately.

"Guiche! Are you alright?"

"....Ugh, fine. Everyone! Keep flying! Fly towards our bright future!"

Guiche pointed at the blurry exit at a distance.

"I finally found you."

Sheffield was like an anxious little girl in love, seeping out happy cries. *That young teen controlling the copper golems.... wasn't he one of those at Albion, along with that naïve Tristain girl? If that's the case, the direction where they're escaping must lead to that Tristain girl as well, right?*

Most likely, that arrogant Gandálfr will there too, protecting her. This is not a time to attack from the shadows.

"I will – including you little girl – kill of tens of thousands of army troops. That Gandálfr kid may have stopped an army of 70,000.... but if it were me, the enemy would have been simply crushed like ants. "

The Jörmungandr ran as if they were flying. They would never lose to any type of enemy, unless they were fighting themselves.

Riding on the shaky shoulders of a Jörmungandr, Sheffield thought to herfelf :*Why is it that I, having the greatest power of all familiars, always return home in defeat?*

In Albion and Tristain, that puny girl and her familiar made her fail so many times.

Is it the difference between couples?

Between herself and Joseph, there was never much of a couple-like emotion. She only blindly followed his orders. She knew this perfectly, and was perfectly fine about it too.

However, their relationship was falling apart. Sheffield would never admit it, but jealousy burned in her heart. She was jealous of the wonderful relationship between Louise and Saito.

"Unforgivable."

Even though Sheffield was the familiar of a void user, just like Saito, Joseph only considered her as a tool, completely forgetting about love.

That was certainly a fact, something Sheffield understood in that garden blooming of blue roses.

From that point onwards, Sheffield fueled on jealousy secretly.

The inscription of "Myoznitnirn" on her forehead emitted an eye piercing blue light.

"This time, I'll definitely let you die without your limbs, your ashes scattered across Halkeginia."

As events played out, Sheffield no longer cared about whether or not she could incinerate Romalia. All she wanted to do was to rip those two apart.

Then... Joseph would also.... with me....

Sheffield's lips trembled, mesmerized with her own imagination. The Mind of God Myoznitnirn closed the distance between her and the Ondine knights little by little.

"It's already been an hour.... what have the kids been doing? Did they escape from fear?"

Carlo stated his thoughts. Louise's void spell finished being chanted a long time ago. What she had prepared was the same spell she used in Albion to shatter the Jörmungandr to pieces, "explosion".

At the other side of Canyon Street, yelling was heard.

"...ahhhhhhhh!"

Louise squinted her eyes.

Several dots were heading towards her way in midair. It was the Ondine Water Spirit Knights fleeing for their lives using their levitation magic. Behind them

were two Jörmungandr, determined to destroy them.

"Louise! You do the rest!"

The boys zipped past her at an incredible speed.

As soon as the Jörmungandr saw Louise waiting patiently a few hundred meters away, they began firing their guns.

But it was too late.

Louise had already aimed at the two Jörmungandr hunting down the Ondine Knights and unleashed the finished "explosion". A tiny beam of white light shone right in front of the Jörmungandr's eyes and expanded, consuming both monsters.

"Dead?"

Carlo laughed. Yet in the next moment, his smile turned into a twisted face of fear. After the bright light has dispersed, the Jörmungandr were still standing there, dumbfounded of course, but obviously unhurt.

"Not even a scratch…?"

Louise stared back at them, equally dumbfounded.

"....But...why?"

In the battle at Albion, "explosion" proved to work effectively against them.

On one Jörmungandr's upper body, something shaped like a mouth opened up. Sheffield's voice boomed loudly from inside.

"Long time no see, void user of Tristain! I've been looking forward to this conversation."

"Myozunitonirun!"

"What a pity just now! Elven technology is capable of imprinting defensive mechanisms within the armor itself. Although the superficial defense was disintegrated by 'void', the power from the remaining fragments weren't enough

to go through the armor."

She sounded cheerfully.

"Arrrrrrgggggggg!"

Carlo, who in charge of keeping Louise safe, shrieked out of pure fear and abandoned his position. The rest of the Crusaders followed Carlo. In a blink of an eye, there was no one surrounding Louise anymore, leaving her in the open.

From behind, Guiche called out

"Louise! Run!"

Yet, Louise's legs did not move at all.

"I.... I am a saint! How could I retreat from the battlefield?!"

Having fun with their prey, the Jörmungandr paced slowly forward, taking all the time in the world.

"Protect her! Cover Louise!"

All sorts of incantations were directed to the Jörmungandr. Despite their defense magic already being completely shattered, the elven upgrades on the armor was indeed extremely sturdy.

Not only icebolts, fireballs and that sort, even alchemy attacks were futile against them.

Louise prepared to chant again. If once was not enough, then she would keep doing it until it was.

No matter how dangerous the situation appears to be, never give up. By following that rule, she was able to solve all the crises she faced and live until this very day, she thought.

Winds began blaring, just as Jörmungandr swung their gigantic swords. BANG! The ground in front of where Louise was just now had been impacted so forcefully that large cracks formed. The immense pressure caused by the winds

due to the swinging of the swords pushed Louise back.

Letting go her wand, Louise helplessly knelt on the soil.

"You damned girl.... for a long time, I couldn't do anything about you. I won't let you die so easily and quickly. I'll make you pay for showing King Joseph and me contempt!"

Louise wanted to stand up, but her body was not following her basic commands. Jörmungandr, at a height of around 25 meters, really were legendary killing machines.

And so, the two enormous golems stared down upon her from above.

The surrounding Romalian troops commenced attacking in unison. The shells and bullets all landed on the Jörmungandr accurately, since everyone fired at such a close range.

Around a couple dozen of rounds blasted the surface of the Jörmungandr. The "reflection magic" gave a faint shimmer, easily warding off these pitiful attacks.

Around Louise, all sorts of shell fragments poured down like a waterfall. Fortunately, someone of the Ondine Water Spirit Knights generated a shield for Louise.

"Wuaaaaaaaaa! They're monsters! Ahhhhh!"

Soldiers frantically ran for their lives, no matter what their rank was or how much ammo they had left. This was not strange at all. Despite it being called a "Crusade", facing an opponent immune to your attacks is no different asking death to take you away.

Without even being able to dent their armor, courage naturally deflated.

In the crowd of fleeing allies, only Louise was encouraging herself.

"Never give up!"

Until now, hasn't she faced this kind of despairing situation multiple times?

Each time, didn't she stand up and fight back?

Granted power from God....

…relying on this system called "void".

Louise leapt to her wand lying quite close from her. Holding it tightly in both hands, she charged towards the Jörmungandr.

"Don't take me as a fool! Until now, how many times have I defeated you? This time won't be an exception either!"

Louise's words rang out. These words were unsupportable in Sheffield's head.

"Oh? Then what are you prepared to do?"

"Use my magic!"

"How long are you going to keep dreaming? Haven't I proved your magic ineffective already? You useless void user really surprise me."

How did I do it? How did I always emerge victorious then?

"Where did your familiar run off to? That kid always sticks to you like a faithful watchdog, shielding you. Did he leave you out of despair?"

Watchdog?

"I never had a familiar! I did it all by myself...."

Suddenly, Louise felt an intense throbbing pain in her head, thus bending down to the ground in agony.

The pitch black fissure in her heart.... the deeply opened up fracture, was blaming Louise.

"Gentle? You're really foolish, Louise."

Being once described like that by Henrietta....

Did she really rely solely on her power to gain victory?

Then... she was reminded of Guiche's countless attempts to persuade her of something.

Who is Saito?

"....who?"

Every time this name popped out, her heart darkened, tormenting the crack in her heart, as if threatening it to widen even more.

While searching for a light in the pitch blackness of her heart, she suddenly understood everyone's feelings.

Louise was confused. Seeing her face, Sheffield laughed rudely.

"Did you really forget? Or was I right about him abandoning you? That makes perfect sense; you are after all a useless waste of space, the most incapable out of all incapables! Ah, thinking about how many times I actually lost to this weak human! Such a shame! However, today will be the end! I will show my master your dying face. That way, my master will definitely be pleased, knowing who really treats him the best."

In Louise's mind, something flashed.

Countless episodes of desperation.

Crises conquered by Louise.

But, inside... something made her feel that these adventures were but silly dreams. She was unwilling to accept it. *Am I not really myself?*

Then...who?

A silhouette of somebody tampered around with Louise's heart. That gentle silhouette. That projection, encouraging her in her memories, shielding her from attacks…

"Save me."

Louise pleaded for help without thinking.

"Begging for your life? You’re actually begging for your life?"

"Saito, save me!"

Like chanting an unknown spell, these words flowed out of Louise's mouth naturally. Even though these words were unknown to Louise's knowledge, as long as this name came out, for some reason she felt like she would definitely be saved.

"Oho, even the legendary void mage gave up and started praying? Compared to my master's power, you puny void user are weaker than a newborn infant. You shame the carriers of void! Suffer my wrath!"

The Jörmungandr raised its foot. In Louise's vision, the Jörmungandr's humongous foot kept magnifying. What was about to destroy her was a giant's foot.

Frightened to the core, Louise cried out

"Saito! Save me!"

Must live, must definitely live.

If she died.... she could never recognize the gentle shadow again. Louise knew that this would be something much worse that dying.

....Expecting that instant to be her last, these thoughts zipped through her mind.

CLANG!

A sound of solid objects colliding was heard.

Louise opened her eyes and… the foot of the Jörmungandr that was about to crush her was gone!?

The Jörmungandr's giant body tilted backwards, losing its balance. Its huge body collided with the cliffs, flailing its arms and legs messily. Because it lost a leg, standing still became a difficult task.

"Eh?"

Louise was totally confused about the events that occured.

The other Jörmungandr swiftly hid behind the rocks.

"Louise!"

Guiche, who was constantly getting her out of trouble, dashed towards her. He picked her up and ran away from the enormous golems.

Like a tightly stretched wire suddenly being sliced in half, Louise fainted away abruptly.

Saito, through his scope, noticed the other one. It was losing its balance oh so slowly, finally taken down on the cliffs of the canyon.

The giant's collision brewed up a stew of sand and stones.

"It looks like it's tuned up too low."

Saito declared while looking through multiple triangular shaped scopes. He originally thought that the Jörmungandr's width was around 6 mails... but seems like 8 mails was the correct answer.

Miscalculating the enemy's radius, the shell hit somewhat lower than where the scope really aimed at.

Saito adjusted the angle of the 88 millimeter cannon. Right in the middle of the large triangular periscope displayed the Jörmungandr crawling for dear life.

Subsequently, he pulled the trigger with force.

Following the loud bang from the turret, smoke emitted from the interior and pumped out slowly from the ventilation above.

Like a spear of light, the 88 millimeter shell embedded itself straight onto the now-no-longer-struggling Jörmungandr.

The armor of the Jörmungandr were originally designed to withstand the maximal magical damage possible. Nevertheless, being capable of escaping harmlessly from the most powerful attacks has its own limits.

The momentum of an 88 millimeter shell, if converted into Halkeginian units, meant that at 2000 mails away, it was able of piercing an 84 millimeter armor plate like cake. An armor thick enough to endure this shell has still yet to exist in this world.

Shells capable of piercing through an armor of that size were not possible in this world. The shells for the Panzer, to everyone’s surprise, were in fact capable of doing so.

Traveling at a speed of over 750 meters per second, the 88 millimeter shell instantly demolished the Jörmungandr fallen to ground, cutting through the armor that caused nobles so much trouble, and exploding from within.

The armor of the dead Jörmungandr expanded rapidly and blew to smithereens.

From the end of the tank's cannon, out came an empty shell. Beside of Saito, a blue-haired girl carried another one approximately half the height of herself.

"Tabitha, not that one. Load the one colored red on the end."

Giving a little nod, Tabitha took another shell from the rack and pushed it within the 88 millimeter cannon according to how Saito taught her. She then shut the cannon tight.

Saito returned to his periscope.

He sought out the Jörmungandr hiding under the shadows of cliff rocks. The moment it stuck its head out to survey its environment, it was already located by Saito.

"Where are you trying to run, you metal pigheads?"

The trigger was pulled without a second thought.

BOOM.

Without deviating at the slightest, the 88mm shell was a perfect headshot, squishing the Jörmungandr's face. Losing its balance, it fell facing the sky.

"Got him, comrade Saito!"

Buzzing through the headphones, cheers were heard. It was Colbert, who was on the controller's seat. On the other side, Kirche exclaimed

"Incredible... that must've been a distance of 2 leagues, yet the shell still hit so accurately!"

What should have been asked was why a Panzer would appear here...

Bursting out of the door, arriving at the mentioned warehouse, Saito found the repaired Tiger I Panzer, accompanied by Kirche and the others. They seemed to have somehow gotten this tank while the ceremony was progressing.

Saito filled the tank with gasoline initially used for the Zero fighter plane, and left promptly. Originally, Saito handled the controls and Colbert watched him excitedly from the side. But, soon Colbert was able to replace Saito, since he learned quite quickly thanks to his past experiences of repairing this tank and his knowledge of machines.

"This is called 'Tiger', right? Controlling this tank is definitely much easier than that 'airplane'. Just pull this, and it moves forward..."

Colbert stepped hard on the accelerator. Instantly, the Panzer's engine roared to life. Hiding behind the dense bushes behind the hills, they were able to observe Tiger's Highway completely.

"If you turn this disk, we can spin."

This was similar to the steering wheel of a car. The Panzer easily changed its course.

"....Oh, exposing ourselves now, wouldn't that be a bad idea?"

"Nah, the smoke from the cannons would reveal us anyway. Just charge forward. If we don't stop the enemy, they might..."

Roaring numerous times, the Panzer dashed to the entrance of "Tiger's Highway". Mixed emotions of jubilation and tearfulness exploded from the fleeing Romalian army once they discovered that two Jörmungandr had perished.

Sheffield, seeing through her monocle, confirmed the massive wreck those Jörmungandr caused when being destroyed.

"From a distance of 2 leagues, penetrating the armor of Jörmungandr.....?"

Unbelievable.

Sheffield quickly realized that there was only one existence capable of achieving that.

"So you finally appeared. How interesting! Let us end it here and now, Gandálfr."

The Panzer roared strongly and charged toward the Canyon's entrance, pushing soil around its sides. There gathered Romalian soldiers and generals.

As Saito emerged from the portal, a cavalry troop marching parallel of the tank greeted Saito:

"Thanks for your help! Destroying that devil-like armored golem.... please inform me of your unit's name!"

"Ondine Water Spirit Knights of Tristain!"

"Understood! There is one more thing I wish to ask of you! Hoisting a flag affects morale! Please hoist this flag on top!"

The soldier handed Saito a flag. It was black and white, showing in its center a drawing of a holy cross.

"What is this?"

Saito was a little bit muddled. Tabitha poked her head out the hole beside and told him "Crusader's flag."

The design was surprisingly similar to the steel cross tattooed on the tank's body. *Supposedly, this is a cross....* Saito searched his memory.

Things turned out a little bit weird, Saito began to realize.

Probably because this was a tank bearing a cross from Earth, carrying a cross of

a parallel world seemed quite odd to him...

Nonetheless, Saito hung the flag on the antenna. Waving in the winds, the flag instantly ignited the morale of the beaten Romalian army.

"Long live Pope his Holiness! Long live the United Kingdoms!"

The knight who handed Saito the emblem, cried out to his own army "Everyone! Attention! The great army from Tristain has joined us in our Crusade! Do not fear! We have the protection of our ancestors!"

Still, the one fighting with the enemy is ultimately me.... Saito muttered to himself.

"The hell I'd believe for whoever’s God this is for!"

Above the Crusader's flag, Saito hung his own cape.

His cape was decorated with delicate patterns of **Sulaliai ()** medals, dancing in the wind. With the sounds of chains clinking together, the Panzer arose to life once again.

In the valley's entrance, six Jörmungandr appeared.

Sheffield, who had acknowledged Saito's existence, decided to defeat him once in for all.

In every Jörmungandr's hands, there were cannons plundered from the "sunken" warship. Quickly, Saito returned to the turret, closed the hatch, and sat in the gunner's seat, staring in the periscope.

"Professor! Stop moving the tank!"

Skidding across the ground, the Panzer spat dust in the air, and finally halted.

The distance was about 1000 meters.

From the triangular scope, the Jörmungandr's distinct silhouette was revealed. With Halkeginia's technology, making a periscope this powerful and precise was absolutely impossible.

The Jörmungandr turned their cannons towards the Panzer.

Light began to gather from these cannons.

The six Jörmungandr fired in unison.

Flares produced by the shots flew everywhere.

The shells of the cannons flew in the Panzer's direction, screeching loudly while slicing through the air. Where they landed, dust and dirt exploded violently.

One of the shells landed right in front of the tank, blasting the ground to smithereens.

The tank shook incredibly. Like wood hitting a copper bell, a large echoing 'CLANG!' was made. Tabitha covered her ears and knelt on the floor.

Yet, that was all the damage caused. Similar to cannons made on Earth several hundreds of years ago, it was deemed impossible to penetrate a Panzer's robust armor.

"You dumbasses. Don't even think about winning! You have grown to become giant idiots!"

Saito yelled this and activated the trigger.

"Don't look down on Earth, playground of imagination!"

Completely indifferent of the enemy's speed, the shells demolished every single Jörmungandr the instant they hit one. 'THUNK!' A large hole opened up on one Jörmungandr's giant body; thus, it fell back, killed in action.

The remaining five Jörmungandr, initiated a surprise attack in order to defeat the tank.

At a distance of 800 meters, one fell. At 600 meters, another one fell.

Once the cannon emptied, it was refilled while the tank retreated. Though the Jörmungandr were very speedy, catching up to a Panzer driving backwards was still quite difficult.

The Panzer appeared to be heavy; in reality its speed was not as dull as imagined. Moving to keep its distance, and stopping again to fire, this was Saito strategy.

Saito repeated this retreating attack numerous times.

Jörmungandr were no different from sitting ducks, called to death one by one by the Panzer. Because of the sudden appearance of Gandálfr, a hot-headed Sheffield lost her senses and actually ordered the entire army to charge forward.

Apparently, Sheffield had no idea what a "tank" was.

In front of a grand and wide plain with no cover whatsoever, charging together towards the tank.... was suicide.

Chapter 9: Memories of the bond

The Water Spirit Knights rushed towards the Panzer hitting down 8 Jörmungandr in succession.

" Saito! That's Saito!"

Looking at the flying chevalier's cape hanging on the antenna, Malicorne yelled.

"Incredible! A cannon installed on a giant steel box!"

Just as Saito explored from the hatch, he was tightly surrounded by the Ondine Knights.

"Sorry I'm late~~"

Faced with his companion's warm welcomes, Saito shyly said. Guiche, with bandaged hands himself, hung on Saito's wrists with watery eyes.

"I, I, I.... always believed in that, that, you would, would come back..... You're vice-captain...."

"Alright,alright~"

Then Gimili gently lifted Louise on top on the turret.

"Saito, your master. Other than fainting...., there should be no damage overall...."

Saito stared at Louise, the pure white nun clothes were almost ripped to shreds, on her cheeks quite a few areas were stained with blood and dust.

Saito thought "Obviously, must have gotten into trouble again."

Although against war so much..... actually going to the front lines, for my sake, forced to join this war by contracts...

"Stupid...."

Saito softly blamed.

Did she want to let himself go home that much, Saito gently touched Louise's cheeks with his hands.

.....Slowly, Louise awoke.

Widening her eyes to the unknown teen in front of her

".....who, are you?"

Suddenly realizing him stroking her own cheeks, Louise pushed Saito away with sudden force and jumped onto the ground.

"De-Despicable!"

Guiche and the others went "Ohhh....." and slapped their hands to their foreheads.

"What are you talking about? You're...."

Saito looked at Louise with shock, did she completely forgot about him? Did she hit her head somewhere?

Guiche and the others shook their heads with "Oh no Oh no"s and told Saito

"Seems like Tiffania's magic was used to, remove all memories about you."

"Oh?"

Saito looked at Louise, dumbfounded.

That "erasing memory" magic? Used? Really?

Under great shock, Saito asked Louise

"It's me, did you really forget?"

"Uh-huh....." Louise made a low pitched whine like a wild cat angry. Saito

found a feeling of helplessness all over his body.

Really....this idiot...., always making decisions on her own, doing whatever she wants.....

"I said, you..... what were you thinking! Really, the word dumb is designed especially for you...."

"Who, who's dumb?! Where are your manners!"

"Erasing memories about other people on your own..... what were you thinking!"

With mixed emotions of anger and sorrow, Saito shook his head.

Such a fickle girl. Louise only sent me back for because of my situation. A truly gentle child.

But then again, you didn't need to forget about me as soon as I'm gone, can't you still have a bright tomorrow without doing that.....

If we were in each other's shoes, I would never choose so. I would Definitely always remember each other, treating it as a treasure of being alive...."

Obviously, looking at this peach-haired girl, this kind of thoughts never came to her.

"Is that so, is that so, did you really want to forget about me that much! Yes, I might have done something to make you angry...., but did I try my best to live on either!"

Saito submitted to his anger and yelled. If that were the Louise before she lost her memories, this is not something Saito would have dared said in front of her.

"You did something to make me angry ~~?"

Seeing Saito like this, Guiche couldn't help but shake his head

"Wrong."

"What?"

"You really don't understand a girl's feelings! This proves your importance in Louise's heart, something irreplaceable! Seeing each other is impossible, her feelings to you were unbearable."

Guiche's words hit Saito, the previous anger turned into feelings of love.

Thinking of me that much....

Saito looked at Louise with eyes filled of enthusiasm.

Louise somehow also blushed.

Jumping down from the tank, he held Louise's hands.

"Wh-What...."

Louise turned her head to one side.

"It's me, Saito Hiraga. Also called Saito, Saito Chevalier De Hiraga. Your familiar, did you forget, did you completely forget?"

"Saito.....? Familiar?"

Louise couldn't help but repeat the name she'd heard so many times. Then.... this teen is her familiar? Yet, to her, there is no recognition at all.

"That, listen to me, Louise, you let Tiffania use the 'forget' magic and erased your own memory!"

"Oh? And why would I ever do that?"

"That, em, er, love~~. It's what you had towards me, though it sounds a little embarrassing, deeply loved me. Just like...."

"Love? Who towards whom?"

"You, loved me."

Saito nodded softly with a red face and confirmed, then "Thunk", between his legs came a brutal kick. Saito fell to the ground in slow motion.

"Let me ask again, who, towards whom?"

Saito squeezed his hands between legs and yelled

"Everyone, you tell this little dumb girl, this innocent girl, how much she loved and wished for me!"

Malicorne whispered quietly in Louise's ears

"This guy is out of his minds."

The other boys pressed him immediately

"Hey, fatty!"

"No....., uh, that came out accidentally, it's better to be companions, you know."

Guiche shook his head and told Louise

"-Sigh, how should I put it, just like what Saito said, whether you loved him or not, through magic you erased all memories about him, that is completely true."

The Ondine knights all nodded their heads in confirmation, seeing this, Louise said "Understand" and hung her head.

"So you finally believe me!.... Such a heavily suspicious girl."

"However, saying I love this kind of guy is completely out of your mind!"

"Ohh, about that, we're not to sure ourselves...."

"Guiche!"

"Can't help it, love really can't be seen through attitude, you know."

"Beside, let me clearly say it right now, you are way off from the type I like!"

Louise pointed towards Saito and announced. Saito completely lost his face after

hearing.

"No way...."

"Wow, so cruel~~"

Gimili spoke.

"Not, not necessarily, I guess"

Malicorne rasped with a rough voice.

"You may possibly be my familiar, also, I should thank you for saving me just now. However, I am 'Saint of Aquileia', a girl completely pure! My love is devoted across the entire Halkenia, across all Brimir believers, not to people like you...."

Louise pointed to the wobbling Saito,

"You commoner faced guy!"

"This might be too... don't think he can ever stand up again."

Reinard said with a face full of sorrow and sympathy.

"Looks like it's more and more possible now."

Malicorne's breathing became heavy.

Guiche almost gave compassionate tears seeing poor Saito like this; Colbert, Kirche and Tabitha also came out from the tank and watch this scene play out interestingly.

Since some time ago, Romalian soldiers started to gather around interestingly to watch what's going on.

".....Urg"

Shakily, Saito stood up.

"Do you understand? If so then go attack the enemy, kill every one of those

Gallian bunch, come on, aren't you my familiar! Get to work!"

Waving her hand, Louise said cheekily.

"Commoner faced....? Perhaps that's true, but Louise, do you know what you did to this commoner face?"

"Oh? What are you talking about, we're in the middle of a Crusade! Go and get to--"

"Crusade so what!? Your holiness and all go eat my shorts!"

"Such insolence..."

Louise raised her hand and prepared to slap Saito, but Saito caught it in midair tightly.

"Pretended to be asleep."

"Huh?"

"You kissed me when I was pretending to be asleep."

"What, What are you talking about!/"

Saito continued under a burst of unknown enthusiasm.

"Saying 'you may sleep on my bed' with a blushing face to me."

"Wa-wait! Know your place....."

"Boat, on the boat, you allowed me to 'touch any part of your master's body'."

The gathered crowd broke into whispers of astonishment.

"Louise, pretty brave, aren't you."

"Did, did not say these kind of things! This guy is lying!"

"Wearing a black cat's dress, you said 'You are my master today~'; In Albion you told me, 'Hurry up and do it to me'."

"Louise is incredible!"

"Let's see how she defend This."

"Even more intense than Saito"

"How strong a love potion will need to be to have that kind of effect...."

Hearing this kind of murmurs, Saito openly said

"There was no love potion."

"Just what I thought, this is really incredible!"

Malicorne said and put his hand on Louise's shoulders,..... with one sweep of her leg, Malicorne's fat body flew to the distant universe.

"Don't, stop telling lies!"

Louise's flying leg was stopped by Saito's tight ones this time.

"All of the are true. Louise, frankly, compared to that,.... you are really it. I may be a dreaming commoner's face, but you are even worse. Honestly, there's no one above you."

"In-insolent! Some-Someone, tie this guy up for me, treat it as a questioning! Insulting the saint of Aquileia with lies....."

"But, that's exactly the you I like...."

Saying so, Saito suddenly hugged Louise, and planted a kiss. Louise blushed to her roots just as suddenly.

His body just reacted that way.

For an unknown reason, like Brimir in his dreams telling him to do it.

"The bond between a void user and his familiar is unbreakable."

That's right.

A unbreakable bond even in different worlds,.... how can it disappear from just magic?

Both lips kissed tightly by Saito, Louise let him go his own way, both hands raised highly limped slowly, through the tightly linked lips, something seemed to be flooding Louise.

A warm current of warmth slowly filled up the crack in her heart, letters without recipients began to named, completed.

Blank memories started having its shape, colors.

Fouquet's Golem, traversing through Albion.... spiking every single part of her memories, simultaneously, every sorts of events surfaced as well, happy ones, embarrassing ones.

All of what Saito just said were also freshly imprinted in them.

"Chirp", their lips parted, Louise cried out intensely

"Saito!"

"Did you finally remember,..... this is great!"

"W-w-w-w-w-why...."

Louise's pair of eyes were overwhelmed with tears.

"What?"

"Why didn't you go back like a good boy"

Louise thumped Saito's chest gently with fists.

"Do I need to explain, of course it's because I have you."

Hearing this, Louise couldn't hold back any longer, pulling Saito towards her and kissed him deeply.

But soon she realized everyone around looking and pushed Saito away with sudden force.

"W-wait! We're still-still in a battle, what are you doing."

"You started it, besides, don't send other people back when you feel like it!"

Louise's lips trembled, trying to say something but couldn't. Eventually, crystal clear tears dropped from her eyes and cried.

"Because..., because Saito saw a letter from your mother and cried...., you looked so sad, compared to me, didn't you want to go home more.... I thought Saito can only have true happiness only after going home....."

Saito lifted Louise's head gently and said

"My own future, should be chosen by myself. My happiness, I'm sure is already here...."

Uncontrollably, the two hugged each other tightly. This time, Malicorne flew towards them using magic and separated both of them.

"OK~, show's over.... ok? Otherwise, big brother is really going to be angry~"

Baring a fearsome smile, Malicorne threw a Crusade's flag into Saito's face.

"Now, we're in a Crusade....~"

Saito and Louise both stood up, blushing, intentionally coughing with an "ahem" together.

Saito let Louise sit on the seat of the tank commander's.

"Enemies.... how much are left?"

Guiche asked.

"All of them fled? If there were more, they would have attacked us."

Reinard answered.

Saito looked towards the deepest part of the Valley.

This.... has not ended, Saito felt.

"Anyhow, let's advance forward for now. Leaving them behind would be troublesome."

The teens nodded their heads in agreement, surrounding the Panzer and went into formation.

"Everyone distant yourself a little behind, you don't have much armor."

The steel tiger, once again, set forward to the depths of "Tiger's highway", followed closely by the Ondine Knights. After seeing them disappear into the canyon, the Romalian army also followed inside.

Deepest parts of the Canyon....

Inn street, Sheffield gazed at a portrait of Joseph on her hands. On her face is a face of shock that cannot be faked. The large force of Jörmungandr turned into 2 in almost a blink of an eye.

Enemy's long ranged cannon.... the Jörmungandr's prided armor was merely paper in front of its power.

What should be done to achieve victory?

Herself..... is Joseph's most talented commanders, this must be done....

Seeing Gandálfr coming to his master's aid, Sheffield's head went hot, and used an incorrect method of approaching.

When fighting strong enemies, you should always retreat in and wait in the shadows, patiently waiting to make good use of any mistakes.

--The basics out of basics in warfare tactics.

Myozunitonirun would be out of words if the heard this....

Because of exactly this.....Sheffield rambled.

"Joseph does not actually need me in meaning."

The same as anyone else...., that's why, her existence was permitted.

Yet those two are different.

They have a strong desire for each other. The reason why she lost was not because of Gandálfr, even less, the weapon from a parallel world.

But it's that "bonding".

In a split second, Sheffield felt her whole body almost shaking from anger.

As more Jörmungandr could be made, there was always the chance to fight again.

Even if it's a complete loss, that "steel box" must be brought down.

Sheffield started to collect barrels of gunpowder from the ship which fell out of the sky.

Finally, the panzer arrived at Inn street. What came into sight, was a wasteland made only in one day.

There seemed to be no trace of the enemy at all.

"None.... all fled?"

"Look closely for me."

Louise said to Saito, popping out her head from the hatch.

"You should look closely, can't you see the outside better on your side."

The disadvantage of the tank is its small field of view. If one wants to look around, coming out of the tank is a must.

At right this moment, the wooden barrels placed around the structures exploded.

"Waaah! What happened!"

The original street trapped in the middle of the valley instantly turned into a stew of fog and smoke, from before, a tiny scope where things are barely visible, to now, where every angle seems to be coloured in brown.

Tabitha named the crude source of explosives

"Black powder."

Quickly chanting wind magic as she says, the dust around rose up in the air swiftly.

"Saito, in the front!"

Colbert cried out, in the fog like a moist morning when the sun is about to rise, a Jörmungandr showed itself. Saito who always had his hand held tightly on the trigger, pulled without hesitation.

Bang!

The shell sent the whole Jörmungandr flying away.

Next moment, Louise from the Captain's seat called out

"Saito, from above!"

Completely cornered.

Utilizing its cape to hang on the cliff, the other Jörmungandr jumped down in midair, his hand holding a giant barrel of black powder already ignited.

Looks like it's prepared for a suicide mission.

"Crap!"

Attacking from above, a tank is helpless about it, the barrel isn't capable of aiming above, even if it were possible, there was no time to do so.

Saito dragged Louise up in the cabin of the tank.

But.... after a long period of time, the explosion was still yet to come.

"Huh?"

Saito carefully peeked out of the hatch.

What only came into sight was a green scaled wind dragon tightly grasping the Jörmungandr and flying upwards, the throwing it over one side of the cliff.

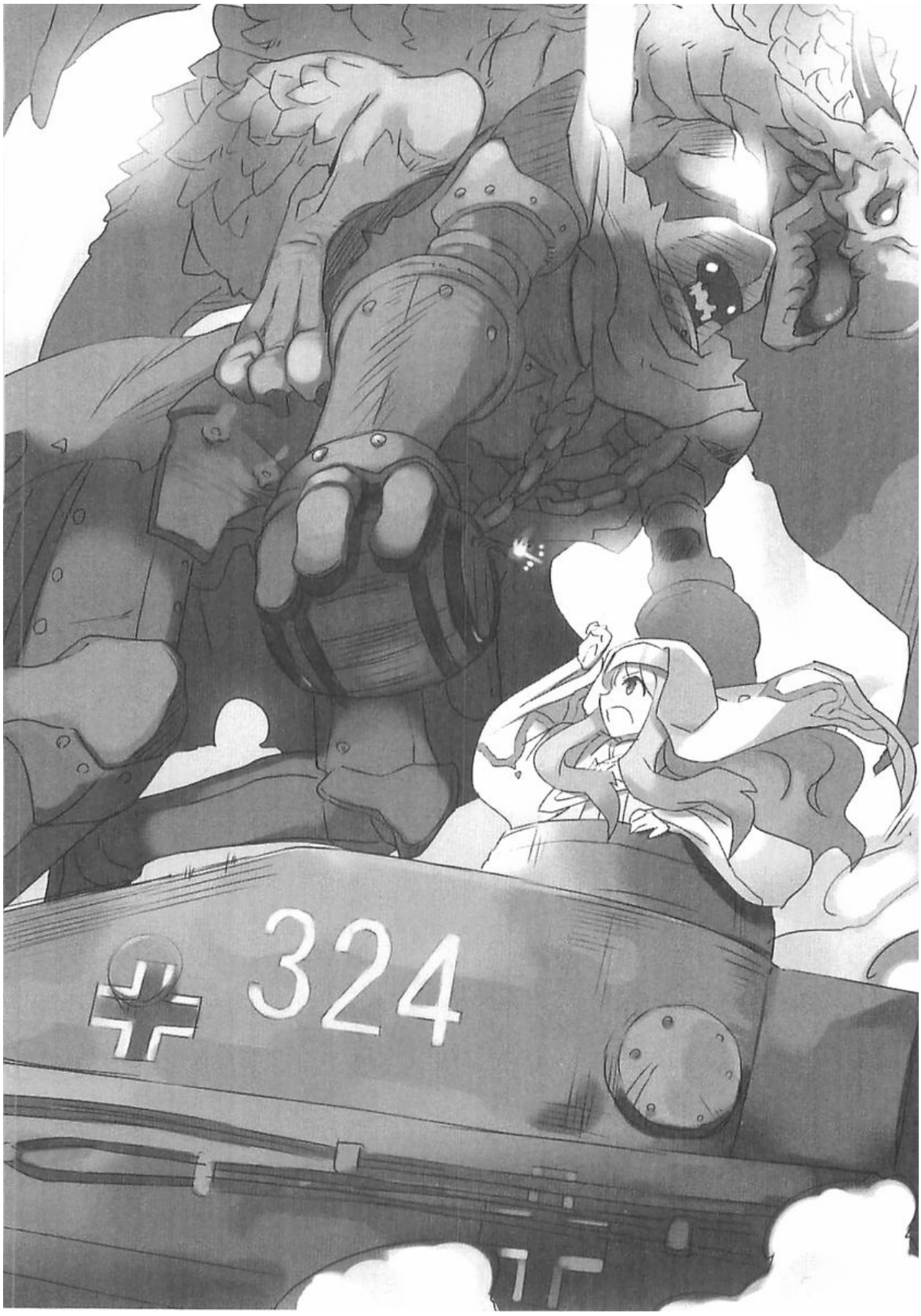
Bang,bang,bang,bang,bang,bang!

With a long long echo, the high-pitched bang sounded throughout the valley. The pressurized air current hit the armor of Panzer violently.

"Saved by wind dragon, but.... that really is a powerful one."

"Slipheed?"

Tabitha standing at a corner shook her head.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"No, my dragon cannot carry something that heavy."

As everyone was pondering who might it be, Julio's laughter sounded from above

"Wahahahaahaa! That was really close, no? You sure owe me one~"

Saito shook his fist in anger, regretting putting the Panzer in danger.

"How is this a debt!?"

Behind, the Crusaders and the Romalian army all arrived subsequently. Carlo standing at the very front waved his staff high and cried out

"Look, the arrogant Gallian dogs have been destroyed by us!! May our ancestor's blessing be bestowed upon all of us!"

"Whooooooooooo!!!" The Romalian army let out a ground breaking cry.

From a distance, Malicorne despised the cheering soldiers and murmured

"What ever did they do?"

"Who knows~~" Reinard answered with his hands open.

Epilogue

Around the time the Jörmungandr had perished completely, the dual-use warships started retreating as well, and surrounding the Romalian soldiers and commanders were all cries of victory.

The Ondine Knights were also indulged in cheers and dancing happily like a bunch of small children.

Watching the Gallian army retreating slowly, Saito murmured

"It has just begun."

Louise replied with a "Isn't that so" and nodded.

"Well, since this is already over, let us celebrate like never before."

After hearing this, Louise suddenly said with an angry tone

"But... the Pope is really despicable, even though he promised me to send you back."

"Those guys,..... only made a promise like this for your power."

"Eh?"

Louise displayed a face of astonishment to Saito.

"I have my replacements. Even if I died, you can summon another out, but you are irreplaceable. You were swaying over whether to help them or not, so they used me as a bait.... although you may have been the one who suggested this play...., the used the feelings of yours."

"How could they!"

Louise's shoulders kept shaking, pulling her hands inwards preparing to pull down the nun clothes.

"Don't."

"But!.... I can't stand wearing this dress anymore!"

"You want to go naked right here?"

Louise went bright red.

"Be careful. Those people can be dangerous if they want. They actually confirmed the anomaly even after detecting it, they aren't easy to take down at all."

Louise hung her head shyly, she couldn't forgive herself being so cheerful after being titled as "Aquileia's Saint".

"Damn this crusade..."

"Don't worry, I will absolutely stop those guys. When the Gallian incidents have ended, when this crusade has finished...."

"Turns out, you're better off going home. Don't force yourself to stay in this world."

Hearing Louise say it like that, Saito pointed out directly

"I haven't seen enough, so I'm never going back."

"What?"

"Your smile."

Louise's face turned scarlet, then tried to show a smile with great effort. Maybe it's because of shyness, maybe it's because of happiness, the expression on her face just doesn't listen to her commands.

Saito, who seemed to remembered something, and continued

"....that's right, when I was asleep, in the dreams I saw Founder Brimir and the

first Gandálfr."

"Really?"

"Ohhh, the feeling seemed really real and..... was that really a dream?"

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe, I really did travel through time after all."

"Stupid, how can that be possible."

Saito shook his head with a grunt, then glanced at his left hand.

"But then again, it could be possible that in this incription, the memory lies there. In the incription of Gandálfr, a memory of two people from a distant past is marked....."

Saito lifted his hand and showed Louise the runes.

At the beginning Louise didn't believe it at all,.... but then she was reminded of the events just happened and started to change her view point.

"If that's so.... then maybe it did happen, my memories of you did completely vanish, yet when we kissed...., it felt like something flowed into my body,..... yes, it's definitely your memory. You remembered all of the things that happened together with me, filling a big hole in my heart....."

Louise said, looking at Saito directly in his eyes.

The memories together with Saito, were all from "Saito's perspective".

In those memories, Louise appeared like a character on stage, in synchronization with her objective point of view, creating something new.

If that was what true...., then the bond between us is truely so deep.

Louise can't help but be mesmerized.

Like watching a movie, she recalled all the events and time she spent with Saito together.

An amazing feeling made her experience an indescribable feeling of comfortableness.

If it's possible to share visual and audio, then sharing memories doesn't sound so far fetched either.

And so it goes on and says that, Saito having a realistic dream about "meeting Brimir himself" isn't something deemed strange either. Suppose all of this is displayed by the inscription, then this couldn't be anything more normal.

But then another question would arise.

Why did the inscription give Saito that kind of dream?

But then again, swimming in the sea of happiness, it's better to just indulge yourself in it as well.

Louise held Saito's hand tightly, reading her treasured memories one scene after another.

Hoho, Saito stared at me even at these times. That pervert~

In class, inside the house...., even when sleeping.

Drowning in a sea of happiness, Louise gently shut her eyes and leaned on him, enjoying all sorts of memories.

Gradually, she understood the key to accessing the memories.

Just by thinking related events, all the images will flock to her as well.

"Hmm?"

Louise saw something other than memories about her, special cutscenes mixed inside...

Like walking somewhere in Saito's own world.... being introduce to someone like Saito's mother... so on so on.

Louise couldn't be more pleased and jabbed Saito in the belly.

"Really, you're such an idiot,.... so stupid, go to hell you~~~~"

"Hey, Hey! What are you looking at. Don't read other people's memories without permission."

Suddenly, Louise's face turned pale, then red, just like a squid being cooked. Similar to a goldfish opening its mouth from the lack oxygen, she couldn't say anything from a while.

"What, what happened?"

"Y-you,you.....me, what did you let me do.... even in imagination this....."

Saito turned pale himself, sharing memories,.... that also means sharing his wild dreams as well?

"Heh, that, y-you, you called me d-d-dd-do-dogg.... your memories what, indecent fantasies! .... I, I, I actually, actually said 'little Louise is master's d-dog' that kind of thing....."

"M-mistaken, that's....."

"AND--AL--SO..."

Saito knew he was in trouble and wanted to run,

"ON--THE--BED---DOING THAT!!!!"

Louise pulled Saito near with a strong jerk and started stomping on him.

"I, I, I would actually be happy about be treated like a d-d-dog, that kind of thing, is absolutely definitely 100% i-m-p-o-s-s-i-b-l-e!!!!! The one being the dog should be you! Don't take me wrong! Make-making me we-wear something like that, that!!"

Watching Louise stomping all over Saito while screeching, Guiche and the others exchanged expressions of sympathy.

"Wearing like that, that, who would that look like?"

Only Malicorne widen his eyes in excitement to watch this scene.

"Don't really want to imagine it."

Guiche muttered while shaking his head.

"Say, Crusade, really is beginning."

The team all looked up in the sky,

Crusaders riding Pegasuses drew a pattern of holy cross in the sky with magic smoke.

The beautiful floating pattern of the holy cross.... as if showing Halkenia's future, a cold shudder was sent down Guiche's spine.

In the Panzer under inspection for damages by Colbert, beside the gunner's seat, laid Saito's laptop.

Forgetting to turn off the power from the emergency, the computer display revealed a email.

" To my dearest mother,

You must be very shocked, I am Saito. Not saying anything and leaving, I am really sorry, no, it's not exactly 'not saying anything'. .....Even if I explained it to you, you wouldn't understand, so let's leave it that way.

Thank you for your letter.

Thank you for worrying about me.

Just now I saw the face of mother's. Mother seemed to be much slimmer. I felt very guilty, everyday having a good meal myself. Although it may be from working too much you lost your appetite, but please satisfy yourself from 3 meals.

I am still alive.

And also very healthy, rest assured.

I am now at a place different from Earth.

You may not believe it, but this is true. You may be thinking if there is a problem with my brain...., but, it's true.

Here, my friends and a person very important to me is in a giant mess here.

They need my help.

That's why.... I still can't come back yet.

But, I will definitely return one day.

Bearing presents.

That's why, please don't worry about me.

Convey to dad and the others, and greet them for me.

This happened in an emergency so forgive me. I have to hurry even when writing this.

Thank you, mother.

Really, really grateful.

Thanks for worrying about me.

Despite it may be difficult living here, but I am very happy.

Thank you so much for bring me to life.

Then, goodbye.

Saito "

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ The expression "swallowed by the army" essentially means "killed by the army."
2. ↑ An idiom that expresses how shocking some information is.